

[P. 162-C]

For one thing it is often difficult to tell whether a particular legend is of villager or Pygmy origin. Even from the remoter groups of Pygmoids in the central Congo, legends of origin among both villager and Pygmy agree that the Pygmies are the original "people of the forest." Verner (1902) refers to legends from the Wissman Falls area, told by both peoples, that give a purely practical account of how the Pygmies were driven before villager tribes invading their country, and how some retreated farther into the forest and others were captured and brought with their captors. Torday (1925b) gives a Luba legend attributing the origin of the Pygmies to Woto, Father of the Luba, who brought them out from the trees of the forest by singing. Torday (1925b) also mentions an interesting custom on the accession of a Luba king, the ceremonial for which requires the Pygmies of the kingdom to come to the capital to act as bodyguard for the new king. 174 [648] .

[ARCHERS]

622 [P. 186-A]
622 leadership among the Mbuti except very rarely.
213 He himself discusses the lineage elders ("*Sip-
888 penältesten*," Schebesta, 1948, 332, 559) and
648 states that lineage authority lies with these
elders alone. Under villager influence these
elders may assume the characteristics of a chief
(cf. the "Sultani" of the Pygmies, mentioned by
Geil, 1905). Encouraged in this by the villagers,
who see a way of extending their authority, the
lineage elders may appear to become headmen
or chieftains of Mbuti bands, representing the
band to the village chief.

622 As mentioned above, the authority of the
613 elder derives from his age, by virtue of which he
888 represents the lineage ancestors. Any offense
[769] against the elder is an offense against the line-
age. He takes precedence in all matters: the
best part of the game is his, whether or not he
took part in the hunt; he presides at various
ritual offerings; he is responsible for settling
disputes with other bands or with villagers; he
leads at the head of the dance. Succession by
age is strictly observed. This much Schebesta
(1952, 221-223) reports, but without citing
examples in sufficient detail to enable us to
make a valid comparison between different
groups or bands.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4 •
Mbuti
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[ARCHERS]

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Informal relationships occur through the custom of family visits to relatives in other bands, and, perhaps most important of all, through bands attending each other's dances. Here the Mbuti extend their social boundaries and find suitable partners for married life. There is no detailed study of inter-band relationships or of the precise implications of inter-band marriage. Joint hunting is rare, except for *begbe*.

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[224]

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BANDS AND
VILLAGERS

These relationships are essentially between the lineage head and the villager chief, according to Schebesta. Maes (1935, 138) writes that the villagers regard the Pygmies as beasts of burden and that the villager chiefs force them to act as porters and to help with the upkeep of the roads (a duty imposed on the villagers by the Belgians). Costermans (1937), however, agrees with the opposite opinion that the Mbuti, who undoubtedly stand in definite relationships to the villagers, accepting their patronage, do so only as long as they find it convenient. On the slightest pretext, they transfer their allegiance to another chief. The Mbuti, he says, do not recognize the authority of the villager chief, nor do they pay any attention to villager manners and customs.

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[563]

[NET HUNTERS]

[P. 211-C]

alliances change in this way it is a source of friction between the two village groups involved and was at one time a frequent source of inter-village warfare. 439
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Prior to this trade relationship, however, Putnam stresses the importance of the place of the Pygmies as mercenaries, acting as spies and scouts for warring village tribes. From his inquiries during his first period of field work in 1928 he surmised that throughout the Ituri this had at one time been the major basis of the Mbuti-villager relationship. It necessitated the supply of food by the villager to the Pygmy, as the latter had no time to hunt and gather his own food. When the Belgians put an end to tribal warfare, there was no further need for the Mbuti as mercenaries, resulting in the present trade relationship. The difference between net-hunting Pygmies and those of Schebesta's account, in their relationship with the villagers, is that among the archers the relationship is band to village, a result of the Belgian bolstering of chieftainship, even where it did not exist, for administrative convenience. The village "chief" then chooses to work through a Pygmy "chief" 648 •
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[NET HUNTERS]

of his own creation. But among the Epulu net hunters, and other central and western groups, in which village tribal structure has not been so greatly affected, the relationship is still, in Putnam's opinion, intensely personal between individual and individual, or family and family. The superficial dissatisfaction manifest between Pygmy and villager over their trade relationship is a result of and symbolizes the present stratification with the villager at the upper end of the scale and hides the inner feelings of loyalty and affection that Putnam says exists between the two groups. 648 • 184 177 591 [439]

SOCIAL LIFE

FAMILY ORGANIZATION

For the most part the family organization among the net hunters is the same as that described by Schebesta for the archers, and, as with them, some of the women come from different bands and are strangers to one another. The net hunting camps are larger, however, than those of the archers, and it is seldom that a bride finds herself a total stranger in her new home. Further, because of the differences in hunting technique, cooperative feeling among the women of a net-hunting band is much stronger than that 621 562 582 784 621 476 184 562

[p. 211-0]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
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[NET HUNTERS]

[P 229-C]

lage for any length of time, as when the villager needs help in the cutting of new plantations, then the Pygmy dance is a spectacle eagerly awaited by the villagers.

Finally, Putnam mentions the fact that, when there is a case of poaching by one band within the territory of another, instead of one lineage head or "elder" consulting the other (the process described by Schebesta for the archers), the bands probably just inform the villagers involved and leave it to them to settle.

In disputes between villagers and Mbuti, there is no question of any one Mbuti representing his lineage or band; such of the more important hunters as are available, and usually a number of the younger men and even older boys, come in a body to argue their case together. The villager is always at a slight disadvantage. While the Mbuti can easily move and find another village patron, it is not so easy for a villager to find more Mbuti.

ORIENTATION

There is little call for comment on this section. Despite their linguistic differences, it seems that the Ituri Mbuti form a broad cultural unit physically differentiated from other Pygmy or Pygmoid groups, notably the Twa of the Kivu area and the Tswa farther west. However, before any conclusion can be reached, we need more detailed studies, of the Pygmies of equatorial and western Africa in particular.

The hunting band appears to be the largest political unit, except in opposition to the villagers when, it seems, Pygmy bands may unite regardless of clan or lineage considerations. There is no evidence that, during the period when the Pygmies were used as mercenaries, they ever fought with one another at the behest of the villagers.

Despite Schebesta's assertion that *efe* is, in fact, the remnant of the original Mbuti language, linguists disagree on this point. Van Bulck (G. van Bulck, 1948, 1953; V. van Bulck, 1948, 1952) questions it. Professors Tucker and Meeussen (in conversation) indicate that the possibility of determining its correctness with any degree of certainty is remote. This attitude

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Mbuti

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[P.255-A]

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turn was free to return to his nomadic existence. We can suppose that the present relationship between the villagers and the Mbuti originated in this way and not in economic dependence or physical subjugation. Whereas it was once a clear patron-client relationship, it now seems to have no such clear basis, either economic or political.

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There is, among both the archer and the net-hunter Mbuti, a trade relationship with the villagers, but this now appears to be economically artificial rather than necessary. Particularly among the net hunters, who are more nomadic than the archers, this trade relationship is little more than one of mutual convenience. By itself, trade does not provide a

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sufficiently stable basis for Pygmy-villager interaction. The spasmodic nature of contact between the two peoples complicates the issue further. Also, because of their nomadic existence and the loose structure of band composition, any Pygmy net hunter establishes relationships with villagers in different villages, quite possibly of different tribes. It seems that greater stability is precisely one objective that Mbuti participation in the *nkumbi* achieves, for this festival is common to the majority of the tribes in the area.

1: Turnbull E-4, 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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shows the extent to which these particular Mbuti preserve their "in-group" feeling. 000

A Pygmy net-hunting band is powerfully integrated yet fluid, and its contact with alien societies is necessarily unformalized. Less well-knit bands, such as may be found among the archers described by Schebesta, may find it possible to enter into some kind of symbiotic relationship with the villagers, but not so an active, nomadic, net-hunting band. Some kind of relationship must be established because of the inevitability of contact. As the smaller, more powerfully integrated group, the Pygmies must make the move to fit into the larger, looser group. But there is no question of absorption; the smaller group preserves its identity. The *nkumbi*, and participation in or adoption of other villager ceremonies, provide the Mbuti with an opportunity both for establishing a place in villager society and for asserting their independent set of values by opposition. The antagonism that remains and is even heightened by this opposition is smoothed over to some extent by the secondary mechanism by which the two groups attempt to express their relationship- mutual trade

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1: Turnbull E-4, 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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Zaire FO1

tionship—mutual trade. Trade may be an initial step in the direction of the symbiosis described by Schebesta (1941, 263) for the archers and their Lese neighbors. Joint participation in the *nkumbi* indicates no more than a willingness on both sides to acknowledge an unavoidable relationship based, as much as anything, on mere territorial propinquity. P
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What at first appears to be a conformity by the Mbuti to villager custom now appears as a superficial conformity at best and one that barely conceals a detachment of two ways of life. By his participation in the *nkumbi*, and, we may suspect, in other villager institutions, the Mbuti shows his willingness to accept an outwardly subordinate position in villager society. This acceptance is partly responsible for the popular notion that the relationship is one of master-servant or patron-client. His rejection of the inner significance of the ceremonial shows not only a superficiality in the process of acculturation and assimilation but a conscious effort on the part of the Pygmy to keep his two worlds apart—the sacred world of the forest, with one set of values, and the profane world of the villager, invader of the forest, with another set of values. The Epulu Mbuti, at least, have P
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[P. 255-D]

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hunting bands. We seem to have, throughout, this clear opposition between the forest and the outer world, the Pygmies and the villagers, the human and the non-human worlds. As far as we can see, both the archer communities and the net hunters maintain their separateness, however close their symbiosis with the villagers may appear to be. They maintain not only a physical distance between themselves and their villager neighbors, but also a spiritual one, emphasizing their own indigenous system of values in opposition to that of the villagers. It remains for further field work to tell us whether the system of values held by each group is the same, common to all Mbuti, or not. Despite the difference between Schebesta's account of the archer *toré* association and my own account of the *molimo*, a re-interpretation of the material published by Schebesta could easily suggest that there is a remarkable degree of unity here. But as presented, the facts could be interpreted in any number of ways.

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The Mbuti is always conscious of his relationship with the villager and of the subordinate position he is forced to accept. It is a major consideration, it seems, that must be taken into account in every aspect of his life when he is in the village (here I refer mainly to the net [P 294-8])

1: Turnbull E-4, 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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[P. 274-C]
hunters). Even in situations that do not directly associate the two groups, the Mbuti thinks in terms of his ethnic status. Thus, when the villagers were taxed by the administration and exemption was granted to all Mbuti, the point at issue among the Pygmy hunters when they discussed the matter was whether or not such exemption was a slight on the Mbuti, placing them somehow on a lower level than the tax-paying villagers. At least one Mbuti felt so strongly that he secured the necessary money and insisted on paying. The majority, however, compromised by saying that they were different people, so why should the same law be expected to apply to all?

The villager himself opposes the two worlds just as does the Pygmy. While he always tries to include the Pygmy in social, economic, and political fields, there is a rejection at the magico-religious level. In the *nkumbi*, the villagers seemed to be both aware of and unconcerned with the formal rejection by the Mbuti of villager values associated with initiation; the villagers failed to introduce their *molimo* into the ceremony, presumably because there were no villager boys present.

2: Turnbull

FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

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[For additional information on the question of Villager influence on the Mbuti, and Villager/Mbuti cultural differences, see also Congo-Kinshasa FO1, categories 101, 241, 105, 628, 361.]

2: Turnbull

FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

- 648
- 177
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[Author's general discussions of his approach to the problem of Village/Mbuti relationship, in which there is little presentation of specific economic, social or cultural data on the relationship, will be found in category 121.]

2: Turnbull

FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

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[For additional information on Villager/Mbuti relationships in which interpersonal and/or kpara/kare (artificial kin) aspects predominate, see also 608, 571, 578.]

114 rest-house or with other Europeans. Mr. and Mrs. Putnam had long established their own *bona fides*, and indeed fitted perfectly into the traditional village structure in this area, where a number of different village tribes converge. Their friendship for me placed me on a particularly favorable footing with both the villagers and the Mbuti, and I knew that I could count on protection from any interference from other Europeans, administrators included, who might wish to visit me. (Naturally I established perfect accord with the central and local administration, who offered every co-operation, but I was particularly concerned that I should not receive "friendly visits," as it was the policy of both villagers and Mbuti, for different reasons, to keep Europeans out of the forest.)

[22] Having established my headquarters, building a somewhat larger but otherwise typical mud house on the fringe of the village where the Mbuti had their semi-permanent village camp (see Plan 1A, 1B), I paid my respects to the divers local village chiefs and head men, mostly of the Bira, Ndaka, and Ngwana tribes. At this time the local Mbuti band was in the village, but a sudden epidemic of stomach disorders, resulting in a number of unexpected deaths, caused them to leave for a prolonged hunting spell in the forest, taking me with them.

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[65] While the deaths, which included men, women and children, were most untimely and unhappy from a personal point of view, they achieved everything else that I could have wished for as an anthropologist. Prior to precipitating the flight back to the forest, they gave me an opportunity to study in the greatest detail the reaction to the death of an Mbuti in the village, both from the village point of view and from that of the Mbuti themselves. I at once witnessed what I had seen on my previous visit when observing the *nkumbi* initiation; namely, the almost desperate attempt of the villagers to assert authority over the Mbuti. In this case the attempt was made by controlling the mourning and burial proceedings, claiming that the Mbuti had no ritual authority in this respect and were dependent on their *kpara* ("masters"). The villagers attempted to subject the Mbuti to the supernatural sanctions of village lore, and then they attempted to assert more direct political control by calling on their own ritual specialists to determine the cause of the deaths, and to search for the witch responsible. This will be described later (pp. 74 seq.); it is mentioned here to show how closely I was thrown into contact, at the outset, with the Mbuti/Villager relationship.

123 sults I wanted I had no alternative. Other methods would have pro-
duced different, though not necessarily contrary, results.

However, there were inherent limitations in the technique fol-
lowed, which involved close identification and integration between
myself and the Epulu net-hunters. For one, by identifying myself
with the Mbuti, my relationships with the villagers were automati-
cally worsened; the mere fact that I preferred to study the Mbuti
rather than the villagers was ground enough for hostility. But being
accepted by the Mbuti in their forest hunting camps was a privilege
denied to most villagers (though few would have wanted it), and
learning to speak the village language with a strong Mbuti accent
that made it almost unintelligible except to other Mbuti added fur-
ther fuel to the fire. This all made it extremely difficult for me to see
the Mbuti/Villager relationship from any but the Mbuti point of
view, though I tried, at the end of 1958, to establish a better rapport
with villages both in and beyond the Epulu area.

However, it was impossible for me not to take sides. Had I wished
to work as an outside observer I am not even sure that it could have
been done, as I do not think such an observer would have been
tolerated for long in the forest camps. And as an outsider I would
certainly have been denied familiarity with many aspects of Mbuti
life, particularly the all-important *molimo* festival. In fact, as an "in-
sider" I was able to observe the process of exclusion of the few out-
siders temporarily admitted to a forest camp. But in any case I was
quickly forced by purely practical considerations to take sides.

During the burial proceedings in the village, for instance, in the
first month of my stay, I was invited by both Mbuti and villagers to
take part. But whereas the villagers wanted me to stand by and watch
the digging of the grave under villager supervision, the Mbuti wanted
me to help out with the digging. By acceding to the latter wish I
automatically lost my status among the supervisors, and in fact be-
came unclean and had to ritually wash myself with the other grave-
diggers. And during the post-burial meeting of the men, when the
villagers all argued among themselves as to which Mbuti witch had
caused the death, I had the choice of listening on one side of the
grave with the villagers or of standing on the other side with the
Mbuti and being associated in this way with their mirth and their
ridicule of what was, to them, an utterly nonsensical procedure. And
when on one occasion a burial took place on the morning of the day
that a wedding was to be held in a neighboring village, I had the

OBJECTIVES

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choice of staying to listen to the villagers ceremonially wail on behalf of the dead Mbuti, or of going off with the rest of the burial party, as soon as the grave was filled, to the wedding. I found it more sensible as well as more congenial to prefer the wedding to the wailing.

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These are only a few of the many instances where a choice had to be made, where no middle road was possible even had it been desirable. The result is then necessarily to some extent one-sided, for no matter how I tried to effect a balance by subsequent investigation, I still feel an urgent need to conduct further field work, taking the village standpoint.

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Once started on the road, the process of identification was swift, but never complete enough to render it impossible to observe intelligently and with deliberate detachment. Such temporary blindness to other points of view as occurred took some time to wear off, and this was perhaps the major drawback of the technique, and one that should be borne in mind in the more interpretive parts of this work, for it resulted in a number of unasked and therefore unanswered questions.

Integration demanded a number of things, one of which was that I should at all times be as fully mobile as any Mbuti. This cut down the belongings that I could carry with me; a blanket, a single change of clothes, a typewriter, paper and pencils. With a bundle of this size on my back I was able to travel as fast as was necessary whenever the band moved from one camp to another. It meant that I was economically dependent upon the band, however, so some kind of equilibrium had to be reached. I was not successful as a hunter, being too large and clumsy, and I did not carry a gun nor did I wish to acquire food in this way. When within easy reach of the village, then, I would acquire supplies of village foods, such as plantains, beans, rice and peanuts, at the same time that the Mbuti got their supplies. Instead of barter or theft I used currency, but bought only comparable quantities of exactly the same kind of food as the Mbuti. It was then cooked, usually by a youth who acted as general assistant, informant, guide, mentor and censor, but sometimes by myself or by another bachelor, and shared, as was the custom, among any bachelors who were around at the time. As was also the custom, I was adopted by a woman whose husband was away, but who still had his hunting net and sent it out each day with her stepson. She also sometimes cooked for me, and always built my hut, as she did for the rest of her family.

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tion between villages is due only in part to rivalry for territory. It is also due to suspicion of witchcraft and sorcery, a suspicion that seems to increase as the distance of separation decreases. This, of course, can also be interpreted as an expression of territorial friction, but it is conceived in personal rather than territorial terms, and is accompanied by a general dislike and mistrust of strangers.

Nor must we lose sight of the fact that whereas the Mbuti, even with their nomadism, in which hunting camps are shifted every month, have a strong sense of basic territorial permanence, the villagers have none, and this gives rise to further instability. To mention only one example, it is believed among the Bira that the dead should be buried according to a prescribed ritual, and that the grave should be cared for in a prescribed manner. The burial is always carried out but it is a constant source of conflict having to care for a grave that may be some miles away. Every time a village moves the villagers have to face the fact that they are abandoning their dead, to some extent, and they are unpleasantly reminded of the uncertainty of their own future. We do not know what the original burial practice was before the Bira moved into the forest; undoubtedly changes have been made, but they have not adequately met the new situation.

It is only in light of the relationship between each of these peoples and the environment in which they live that we can understand the relationship between the people themselves. It is in part ignorance of this factor that has led to the gross misunderstanding of Mbuti/Villager relationship, and indeed of Mbuti society itself. Before considering either the Mbuti or their relationship with the villagers, however, a certain amount of further ground-clearing is necessary.

MBUTI, BAMBUTI, BAMBUTI

A certain amount of confusion concerning the Mbuti arises out of conflicting terminology, some of it totally inapplicable or lacking in significance. First we have to be clear why we group together, under any one name, all the pygmy hunters of the Ituri Forest, even though they speak different languages and use different hunting techniques.

Racially, they are clearly one people, quite distinct from any of the surrounding Negro tribes. They form a strongly, visibly distinct unit. Culturally, they are equally distinguished from their neighbors as a unit, being hunters and gatherers, and not cultivators, with a consequently totally distinct social structure. Differences in hunting techniques do not affect the basic structural unity.

[P. 33]

CHAPTER 3

The Mbuti/Villager Relationship

THE QUESTION OF DEPENDENCE

Although we are primarily concerned with the structure of Mbuti society, there are a number of valid reasons why we should first concern ourselves with the relationship between the Mbuti and the villagers.

For one, this has been the area of greatest misunderstanding and this misunderstanding has consequently affected attitudes toward an understanding of the forest hunting and gathering life of the Mbuti even when apart from the villagers. It is widely believed that the Mbuti are subject to village authority, that they are a subordinate people. This belief rests on the assumption that the Mbuti are dependent upon the villagers, and the theory of dependence has been extended to political and ritual fields as well as economic. The exact degree of dependence is something that we have to examine carefully throughout our study, though we can only take it up specifically after we have considered the Mbuti in both the village and the forest worlds.

The notion of dependence has led to the theory that Mbuti culture, such as it is, is in itself derived from the superordinate village culture, and we shall see that this is far from the truth. Even when we look at the Mbuti in the village world it is not hard to see the superficiality of his alleged acculturation, for the very willingness with which he adopts village institutions and falls in with village ways leads him inevitably into one contradiction after another, which contradictions are possible only because the institutions do not have the same structural significance for the Mbuti as for the villager.

The cause of the misunderstanding is largely that previous accounts and investigations have been derived from experience of the Mbuti in the village context, in almost complete ignorance of even

[12] the most general nature of the forest context and in absolute igno-
[114] rance of the structure of the forest world. But this in turn leads to
another reason for considering the village world first, for the universal-
ity of the misconception and its common cause are in themselves
highly significant. The misconception, that is to say the notion of the
Mbuti as a subordinate and dependent people is, although a myth in
actuality, nonetheless a structural factor of the greatest importance,
and it is the relationship of the Mbuti to the village world that leads
to some of the most interesting elements in the over-all social frame-
work of Mbuti society as it is today. It is not our intent to say what
elements of Mbuti society are caused by their relationship with the
villagers, but it is certain that many elements, such as the constant
process of fragmentation, fission and fusion, take on special signifi-
cance in light of that relationship. Even the most central religious
[178] institutions, sacred to the forest, appear to be in the process of adapta-
tion, allowing for and encouraging a widening of the Mbuti social
horizon, bringing about a wider sense of unity (both religious and
political) than apparently existed before.

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262 Ostensibly the relationship is based upon the economic dependence
of the Mbuti on the villagers for food and metal. Both manioc and
bananas (sweet as well as plantain) are grown throughout the Ituri
region and jointly form the staple. Both foods are eagerly sought and
consumed by all Mbuti, who in the forest have nothing akin to the
banana or to the large manioc root. The small, sweet forest *itaba* root
[222] has to be grubbed for, and, as the Mbuti say, it is much easier to get
manioc from the villagers. Other village foods consumed by the Mbuti
are groundnuts, corn, rice and beans but, as for the villagers, they are
supplementary. Any of these foods may be carried off to the forest
camps and consumed there. Indeed in any village on almost any day
[482]
[462] one is likely to see a pygmy woman or two filling her carrying basket to
capacity with such foods and returning to the forest camp. If the
hunting camp is nearby, a regular supply line is maintained, and even
forest food becomes supplementary in Mbuti diet.

439 When in the village the Mbuti also have access to luxuries such as
palm wine, and to certain trade goods; tobacco and second-hand
clothes are the most important such items.

[325] Having no knowledge of metalworking,¹ the Mbuti are without a

• [482] ¹ A few Mbuti prisoners were taught by the Belgian administrator at Mambasa how
x [471] to hammer arrow tips as part of his campaign to "liberate" the Mbuti from their de-
pendence upon the villagers.

Mbuti

Congo-Kinshasa FO1

WAYWARD SERVANTS

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121 ing an ever-present, ever-accessible sanctuary of independence, then
 * 177 we are left with a situation which, if anything, is rather the reverse
 439 of what it is normally stated to be; for we find that the villagers have
 far more need of the Mbuti than the Mbuti have of the villagers.

174 Here we have to look briefly at the historical genesis of the relation-
 * 177 ship, which began with the invasion of the first non-Mbuti tribes
 648 three or four hundred years ago, and continued until the invasion
 reached its climax in the nineteenth century. The Mbuti found them-
 selves caught between a number of warring tribes, and according to
 legend (also according to what one might reasonably expect) each
 isolated hunting band found it convenient to attach itself to one or
 another group of villagers. The villagers, on their part, needed the
 Mbuti as guides, scouts and spies, and, as related today by both sides,
 employed them as such, feeding them in return. When the situation
 became more stable, and notably when the last vestiges of open hos-
 tility were suppressed by the Belgian administration, this original
 relationship came to an end, neither side having any absolute need
 of the other. The Mbuti, however, had developed a strong taste for
 plantation foods and maintained their demands on the villagers. To
 this day, if a villager does not accede to such demands his plantation is
 simply raided and he has no recourse. Recognizing the difficulty of
 making an effective claim for theft, the villagers continued to supply
 food at request, but attempted to secure certain services in return.

P We have already mentioned the attitude of the villagers toward
 439 the forest as a hostile place, and a place that they people with evil
 spirits. One of the services that they have tried to elicit from the
 [177] Mbuti, then, is the supply of forest necessities such as saplings and
 [176] leaves for housebuilding, bark for clothmaking (now almost obsolete
 among all the villagers), and meat and honey. The longer a village is
 in existence, the more scarce these supplies become in the immediate
 vicinity, and the villagers are mostly loath to venture far into the for-
 est. However, plainly, as with the Mbuti, it is a question of conve-
 nience rather than necessity, though the Mbuti say that the villagers
 [176] could never be successful as hunters, being far too clumsy and slow.

P This is all largely a matter of historical conjecture, but it helps in
 providing a sense of direction, and in indicating that the onus for
 maintaining a reasonable degree of reciprocity is all the time upon
 the villagers, not upon the Mbuti. For today the villagers are still un-
 willing to go into the forest, and the Mbuti are still their major source
 of meat, honey and building materials. But there is, today, an addi-

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tional factor that increases the degree of necessity and dependence on the part of the villagers. By "today" I refer to the period of Belgian administration, for which we have historic record. During this period additional demands were made by the administration upon the villagers; notably, able-bodied men were recruited into the road gangs for building and maintaining the thousand-odd miles of road that cross the forest, linking the widely separated administrative posts; and it was also demanded of the villagers that they produce certain specific crops in excess, and cultivate other new crops, particularly cotton, in addition. The food surplus was used to feed immigrant laborers, the cotton to produce some revenue in an otherwise highly unprofitable region.

These demands thus increased the amount of plantation work that had to be undertaken by each village, and at the same time reduced the labor force available. Penalties for failure were severe, and the villagers naturally turned to the Mbuti for help. Equally naturally, the Mbuti declined to help, except when the nature of the work suited their convenience and the rewards were adequate, and a long struggle began that continued right up to the time that independence somewhat altered the situation.

From the villagers' point of view, their relationship with the Mbuti, which had begun to prove rather tiresome and unprofitable, quickly became a matter of acute anxiety. Instead of regarding the Mbuti merely as parasites, which is effectively what they were, the villagers began to regard them as indispensable to the new village economy. From the Mbuti point of view, however, the situation had not changed. The forest was still there as a sanctuary to which they could retire with impunity at, literally, a moment's notice, and the village was still a place where they could relax, enjoy luxury foods, wine and tobacco, in return for a minimum amount of service. Being a practical people, however, they responded, to a token extent, to the new demands for service, in the form of plantation labor. But it was not to their taste, and it proved highly detrimental to their health. The villagers in many cases realized this and compromised by using the Mbuti mainly to maintain guard over the plantations, so they would not be affected by the unaccustomed sunlight or exercise, and only in emergencies asked them to actually work in the fields.

Such emergencies, however, became more and more frequent as administrative demands upon the villagers were increased. The cotton crop became the major issue, and the time of the cotton harvest was

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the one time when, above all others, the villagers needed the help of the Mbuti. And that was precisely the time when the Mbuti were least available, for this work¹ was least to their taste, and beyond a certain point even the Mbuti cannot be bribed.

THE NEED FOR CONTROL

In 1957, and again in 1958, Chief Kachui of the Ndaka tribe found himself in difficulty over his cotton harvest. Of all the tribal chiefs in the Ituri, Kachui was one of the most powerful and one of the most influential. He had the advantage of a government-supported police force at his disposal, but on both occasions when I was at Bafwakoa at the time of cotton harvest he was without his usual retinue of Mbuti parasites. He had his sons deployed nearly to the Epulu to the east, and halfway to Wamba to the north, in an effort to learn the whereabouts of "his" Mbuti, but to no avail. He even used me in the hope that I would be able to discover at least one hunting camp, and I was led to where a few Mbuti maintained a plantation camp, living in the shade of the forest but acting as guards against raids on the plantation by monkeys, baboon and elephant, on the strict understanding that they were not used for work in the cotton fields. Although I was known there, and would normally have been taken straight to the hunting camp, all knowledge of the whereabouts of their fellows was denied. It may indeed have been that the band had broken up and gone in different directions to join neighboring bands that were less pressed, or it may simply have gone far off into the depths of the forest where it could never be found. None of Chief Kachui's threats or exhortations was of the least avail.

At the same time, Chief Kayumba of the Mbo, just across the Ituri River, was having the same trouble, and I saw some seven recently deserted village camps with not a single Mbuti to be found. Kayumba did not conceal the fact that he had constant difficulty of this kind, never being able to rely on the Mbuti to be on hand when he wanted them, and at other times being surrounded and consumed by them. Hamadi, one of the two major Bira chiefs, and probably the most unscrupulous, generally maintained a retinue of Mbuti in village camps, but as far as I could assess it was a floating population that seldom worked on the plantations. Chief Lupao of the Lesé at Nduye complained of being without Mbuti when he needed them, and this was true on the one occasion when I was at Nduye at the

¹[i.e., harvesting cotton -- Analyst]

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time of the cotton harvest. On the other hand, Chief Nakubai, another Lesé Chief to the north, always seemed to have Mbuti at his beck and call, though he maintained them in rather distant plantations, not close to his village, and as far as I know used them only to provide supplies of forest products, and to help guard the plantations.

The lesser chiefs and village headmen, with no police force at their disposal and with less wealth to use in bribes, were rather more successful because the relationship was more intimate and personal. It is not infrequent for a strong attachment to grow between the villagers and Mbuti, and in such cases the economic exchange is much more balanced. In all other cases there can be no doubt that the Mbuti, with less necessity on their side, have all the advantages while the villagers are the losers. It is significant that on the one hand the Mbuti delight in deliberately shortchanging their exchange partners, thus in their eyes proving their own superiority, while on the other hand the villagers are forced by lack of political control to accept such short change with relative passivity, and indeed find ways of rationalizing it. They do this either by referring to the Mbuti as *nyama*, or animals, thus excluding them from the realm of normal, moral human behavior, or else they openly admit the Mbuti are right to help themselves to plantation products.

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This latter admission is one of respect for the anteriority of the Mbuti in the forest and is common throughout the Ituri, and beyond, though by no means always open. It is manifest in certain rituals, such as when villagers offer firstfruits from a new plantation to "their" Mbuti (effectively, any Mbuti that happen to be on hand at the time), or when Mbuti are offered places of honor during funerary ceremonies for important villagers. An exceptional example of this respect occurs among the Tembo/Rega populations of the Kivu district (Map 4), one instance of which occurred in September of 1958 at Mayolo village, where a new chief, Butahiri, was inaugurated. I did not witness the occasion, but he told me that on the day that he was crowned with the traditional bead hat, he had to sleep with his sister ("same stomach"). The next night he had to sleep with an Mbuti girl presented to him by the Mbuti "Chief." Butahiri insisted that there was such a Chief, and said that traditionally the girl was meant to be his daughter, but this was not always possible and in that case it was "some other" unmarried female relative. He said he only had to sleep with her once, after which she was sent

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back to the forest and was never again to be allowed to see him or any of his family, but would be well cared for.

On attempting to find this Mbuti Chief, I discovered that he was in fact just an elderly hunter, and that the girl was his granddaughter. The local Mbuti denied any system of chieftainship, but said that they always appointed one person to deal with the villagers, as in this instance. Both they and the villagers claimed that the legitimate heirs to the chieftainship had to be born of either one of these two formal unions, and that in fact the Chief would sleep again with one or the other girl until she bore him at least two boys. They also said that obviously he would not sleep again with his sister (he himself seemed somewhat disgusted at the recollection of his first night as Chief), and so it would be his Mbuti wife who would provide the tribe with its heir.

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There are also firstfruit offerings to the Mbuti in this area, and the same elements of respect and of economic unbalance extend right out of the forest into Ruanda and Burundi, even to the Twa in their relationship with the Tusi. For our present purposes, however, the two situations are not strictly comparable.

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But however the villagers might rationalize the economic advantages that accrue to the Mbuti, they do not accept the situation entirely passively. They attempt to create some mechanism by which they can exert authority over the Mbuti and compel them to their service. It is quite evident that if the powerful tribal chiefs backed by armed police are unable to pursue the Mbuti in the forest (even the Belgian administration did not attempt to extend their authority this far), the lesser chiefs are going to be that much more incapable of asserting direct political control. Chiefs such as Kachui, Hamadi, Lupao and Nakubai did not even enter disputes concerning Mbuti in their tribunal records, preferring to deal with such cases "directly." I have witnessed a number of such cases, most of them involving alleged theft, or failure to reciprocate in the exchange of food. The Mbuti claim is invariably that the land is his (even when the charge is for theft of property, not of food), and the villager claim is, equally invariably, that the Mbuti are servants of the villagers, bound to them by indissoluble bonds of heredity and by the fact that the villagers "rescued" the Mbuti from the forest. To this the Mbuti may reply that they "dug" the villagers from a hole in the ground and taught them "how to see and smell and hear and talk." If the case involves food, each side claims original ownership of the plantain

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tree and the Mbuti alleges that the villager stole the stem by trickery, leaving him only the leaves, so that the villager was able to replant the trees and grow more, but when the Mbuti planted the leaves they just withered and died.* It is seldom that the Mbuti deny possession of the stolen goods; what they deny is the act of stealing. But whatever the fact, and however judgment is given, the essential point is that there is no mechanism for enforcing that judgment. Judgment being given by a villager is in my experience without exception against the Mbuti, and orders restitution of the property, or service in lieu. If the Mbuti complies, however, it is merely because in his own estimation it is expedient to do so. If he feels that he has exhausted the goodwill of the injured villager he will simply leave, and thenceforth deal with another villager. If any attempt is made to inflict physical punishment on an Mbuti, or to imprison him, then the whole band will initiate reprisal raids on the plantations of the individual who brought the complaint. This seldom happens, because villagers seek other means for achieving some measure of control over the Mbuti, and it is with those that we shall now concern ourselves.

* See Appendix I: "The Legend of the Mbuti Plantation."

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CHAPTER 4

The Notion of Hereditary Ownership

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[186] A superficial glimpse of the Mbuti/Villager relationship in any village might well tend to confirm the belief that the Mbuti are dependent upon the villagers for the very principles of their social organization. This is the claim of the villagers, the more sophisticated of which use a popular description of the Mbuti as "*les gens sans culture*." The Mbuti themselves will readily admit it, and investigation will, up to a point, confirm it. But we have already witnessed one contradiction; namely, that if the situation is one of superordination, and one of total cultural dependence of the Mbuti upon the villagers, then the villagers would have and be able to exercise some form of political control, and they do not. Indeed there are only the most tenuous political mechanisms for relating the two groups, such as the supposition that each hunting band has a headman or chief (entitled *capita* or *sultani*) who is answerable to the village headman. The villagers accord the Mbuti headman due respect, not far different from the respect they would accord a junior headman of another village, and hold him responsible for the behavior of his band. But even supposing that the Mbuti headman had any actual authority over his band, we have seen that the villagers are incapable of enforcing their will by taking either retributive or restitutive action against the band or the *capita* for fear of reprisal, and because of their very real need for the continued, if minimal, service of the Mbuti and their fear of losing even that.

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354 The Mbuti *capita*, in any case, is merely a village creation and carries no authority whatsoever and little influence among members of the hunting band. The other Mbuti accord him his title when in the village, or even when in the forest, if discussing a village problem. They use him as a convenient link who can also serve as a scapegoat. Through their "chief" the other Mbuti are freed of many of the cares and considerations involved in their relationship with the village, but

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the position is by no means always popular, and there are instances of dispute as to who should fill a vacant position as *capita*. Usually it is an Mbuti who has a highly developed taste for village foods, tobacco, wine and hemp. Most frequently he fills a dual role, also being the hunting band's clown, an important figure in the settling of internal disputes, again essentially a scapegoat. He will convey to the hunting band the wishes of the villagers, and discuss with the band the questions of food exchange or supply of labor. Among the net-hunters this is about as far as he will go, any decisions after that being taken by group discussion. Among the archers, however, the *capita* may go further, translating the villagers' demands into more practical terms, and suggesting how the band can best effect a compromise. He may even allocate specific tasks to specific individuals or families, but if he is heeded it is with notably bad grace, and again only because those concerned deem it expedient. The Mbuti headman has absolutely no authority in the band, even in its village context.

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The greater importance of the *capita* among the archers is related to the fact that, unlike the net-hunters, the archer bands are for the most part of the year fragmented into smaller sections, each virtually independent of the other. There is, then, a greater need to co-ordinate their response to village demands, as the villagers take advantage of the fragmentation by attempting to exploit each section simultaneously. Among the net-hunters, whose bands are much more closely knit, and hunt throughout most of the year as large co-operative units, the only function the *capita* serves, from the point of view of the band, is as an intermediary, little more than a message bearer. Certain *capita*, however, among both archers and net-hunters, acquire great renown among their fellow Mbuti by the success with which they cheat the villagers. This indeed is the only way in which the *capita*, as such, can acquire any prestige at all among his own people.

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The major inconsistency of the system lies in the fact that it conflicts directly with a much more subtle means by which the villagers seek to gain control over the Mbuti. Being familiar only with tribal systems of a formal nature, whose organization rests upon the principle of patrilineal descent, the villagers can only conceive of Mbuti society in the same way. Not finding a chief or headman, they impose one, likening a hunting band to a village. They use him in much the same way they would use their own headmen. But the imposition of

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this institution implies also the imposition of the principle of the patrilineal, patrilocal unit. Perhaps at one time it was; it now certainly is not.¹

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Finding political relations difficult to maintain and enforce, and although they still continue to attempt to deal with bands as one village would deal with another, through the *capita*, the villagers then look to interpersonal relationships as a means of acquiring their ends. They impose the village kinship system upon the Mbuti, keeping as accurate an account of the growth of an Mbuti family as they do of their own, and they ally the resultant Mbuti "clans" to village clans. It is easy enough to visualize the origins of the system, when hunting bands found they had to side with villages, the villagers mistaking (or perhaps correctly taking) the bands for unilineal-descent groups. In this way the relationship between the two groups would be hereditary and self-perpetuating. But the band today is not a unilineal-descent group, and may be comprised of a score or more lineages. Thus a village that is a kinship unit, recognizing the senior male-lineage representative as its headman, finds itself in relationship with a band under a *capita* who may only be remotely related to other male members of the band, by affinal or consanguineal ties. The band itself, consisting of different clans, evidently owes its allegiance, under the village system, to different villages.

On the one hand, the village claims to "own" the band, recognizing the *capita* as its representative. On the other hand, as a lineal unit the village claims a hereditary relationship with another lineal unit, and de facto dissociates itself, perhaps with the major portion of the band, and involves itself in politico-economic difficulties with the neighboring villages who may claim the other portions of that band.

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The villagers claim to be saviors of the Mbuti, to have freed them from the necessity of living in the forest like animals, and they justify their claim to ownership in this way. If the Mbuti band were indeed a stable, localized patrilineal unit, then some effective basis for a relationship between the two groups along these lines might persist; but given the cognatic and fluid nature of the contemporary band, the notion of hereditary ownership seldom tallies with effective economic relationships. Consequently there are continuous disputes be-

¹ This is not to say that one could not find a band that, at one time of the year or another, is not in effect a patrilineage. It is, rather, to say that lineality would in such a case not be the essence of band structure, but incidental.

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tween villagers arising out of the migratory tendencies of "their" Mbuti.

The effective system is that each band maintains an exchange relationship with the village or villages closest to its hunting territory, and effectively the relationship is an exchange not between band and village, except as territorial units only, but between nuclear families or mere individuals. If the exchange relationship follows descent lines, it is no more than incidental. From the Mbuti point of view, in any case, it makes not the slightest difference. All villagers are animals to be "eaten" without discrimination. It only makes a difference from the villager point of view, the question of compensation of the right-ful "owner" continually arising.

Leaving the theoretical system for the moment, and looking at the effective system of exchange, we find that the tendency to think of the relationship as hereditary, on the part of the villagers, is irrepressible. As far as the Mbuti are concerned, they pick and choose. As a child an Mbuti may grow accustomed to a number of "owners," as his parents move from band to band, or village to village. When he is old enough to hunt he will choose whichever "owner" happens to be convenient at the time, but if he does not get the treatment he expects, he will without hesitation get himself "adopted" by another villager, even in the same village. The only consideration countenanced by the Mbuti is their own convenience.

A wise villager will treat his Mbuti well, and in return will be able to get the minimum service from them without too much difficulty, and there are instances where such relationship has apparently persisted over several generations (see Table 1). But the contemporary situation militates against persistence. For instance, among the Epulu net-hunters one of the larger "clan" units that made up the total composition of the band was the Puemi clan. In its entirety it was claimed by a prominent Bira named Ngoma. But Ngoma had to spend most of his time in Mambasa, the administrative post some fifty miles from his village, so in his absence his Mbuti were divided, according to the Bira system of inheritance, between his two brothers, Isa and Takalili. But the system did not specify where the dividing line should be drawn, and in any case the Puemi had moved a number of miles in the opposite direction and were on the other side of the Epulu River, in the territory of Chief Kachui of the Ndaka tribe. There they formed allegiances to local villagers, ignored the demands of Isa and Takalili to return to hunt for them, saying that they were

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CHAPTER 5

The Notion of Supernatural Control

THE VILLAGE SUPERNATURAL

We have already seen something of villager participation in Mbuti marriage arrangements, but only from the aspect of kinship. From this point of view the villagers hope to be able to control, to some extent, the movement and residence patterns of the Mbuti, and to support the myth of hereditary ownership. From another point of view, however, villager participation in the marriage of their Mbuti necessarily introduces the Mbuti to the village magico-religious system, through the ritual that consecrates the marriage as well as through the absorption of the Mbuti, in this way, into the village kinship structure. It might also be pointed out in passing that as far as the villagers are concerned, marriages between their Mbuti are of as much political importance as their own marriages, in regulating relationships between one village and another, one segment of the tribe and another. Insofar as our primary concern is with the Mbuti, however, this political aspect does not directly concern us here.

Marriage is only one village ritual adopted by the Mbuti, and in considering any such adoption we have to keep in mind the structural aspects of ritual in the village social system and, in particular, the relationship between ritual and kinship. It is in light of structure that the villager side of the Mbuti/Villager relationship is comprehensible, the attempt to include the Mbuti within the village framework being an attempt to secure some measure of control over them. That is not to say that the motive of control is necessarily responsible for the inclusion, but it is certainly openly acknowledged by villagers and has some bearing on their attitudes.

At the same time we must be aware that on the Mbuti side there is the knowledge that the villagers are seeking to gain control. There is a considered element of risk involved in accepting certain institu-

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tions, even in the strictest village context, but it is outweighed by what at first seems little more than a lively desire to have all the advantages of village life with none of the disadvantages. Again, it is only through an examination of the interrelationship of the institutions adopted by the Mbuti, and their relationship with the indigenous Mbuti social system, that we can arrive at any true understanding of the apparent process of acculturation.

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The attempt by the villagers to assert supernatural control is structurally the most significant, for it involves elements with which the Mbuti have no institutionalized means of dealing. Political pressure the Mbuti can counter by changing allegiance; economic pressure can also be countered, by reverting to the always available pure hunting and gathering economy; as we shall see in the next section, pressure through absorption into the village kinship system is repelled quite simply by the maintenance of an opposed kinship system. However, the Mbuti have no magic with which to counter magic, no witchcraft or sorcery with which to counter witchcraft and sorcery. They do have belief with which to counter belief, but it is part of the belief of both Mbuti and villagers that in a war between the gods, no man can safely predict the outcome. It is in this situation that the villagers do manage to effect some extent of control, but it is also in this context that they come up against the ultimate bedrock of opposition.

Let us look at the various ways in which the magico-religious life of the villagers impinges upon that of the Mbuti, and the extent to which it exerts some measure of control over the hunters and gatherers. Fully recognizing that a clear division of the subject matter is difficult, if not impossible, to make, we nonetheless have to attempt such a division for the purposes of discussion. There is a great deal of overlapping, but nonetheless at the extremes, in this case, the division used here between magic and religion is legitimate.

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By magic I refer to activities involving, on the part of the African, villager or Mbuti, a conviction in the pragmatic relationship between a cause and an effect which, in terms of Western science, is not demonstrable. The term in its usual sense has meaning only as far as we are concerned, for as far as the Africans here are concerned, magical activities are as scientifically valid as any other. They may not always be able to explain the exact way in which the effect is related to the cause, any more than everyone who drives a motorcar can explain the mechanism. Indeed, the corresponding term "medicine"

THE NOTION OF SUPERNATURAL CONTROL

much faith in a charm against a witch's power, if such power exists; their own remedy is retreat to the forest, where there are no witches. They do not believe in the existence of malevolent *keti*, or spirits, as do the villagers.

In the realm of curative magic, then, the villager has nothing to offer that the Mbuti needs, and has no means of utilizing magic or exclusive village knowledge of magical techniques to control the Mbuti.

WITCHCRAFT

If it were not for their own misconception of village witchcraft, the Mbuti would be at no disadvantage through their own lack of it. As it is, however, they tend to confuse witchcraft and sorcery, and consequently find themselves dealing with a phenomenon totally outside their forest-world experience—conscious malevolence.

Their confusion is visible in their constant usage of the terms associated with sorcery, even when only witchcraft is implied. The forest hunters are aware of the theoretical difference, but simply do not believe in the existence of witchcraft substance. They are unwilling enough to believe in malevolent supernatural powers, but events combine to persuade them to belief.

Unlike magic, which applies to natural phenomena, witchcraft and sorcery deal necessarily with the supernatural, and create their own need for protection. But whereas the villagers, in their acceptance of the theory of witchcraft substance, can happily accept a fetish bundle as adequate protection, the Mbuti, seeing the whole thing as malevolent sorcery, cannot believe that a bundle of sticks and bones is going to afford much help. Looking at witchcraft—and sorcery—as something belonging essentially to the village world, however, they do have recourse in flight to the forest, where, in their experience, these supernatural powers cannot easily reach. In the village world they can find no protection, and can only hope for an end to the underlying hostility.

Thus witchcraft, which among the villagers is essentially a mechanism for social control, being a concept employed usefully to bring to light hidden sources of dispute and to publicly shame trouble-makers, inadvertently gives the villagers a weapon against the Mbuti, while at the same time it drives the Mbuti both literally back into

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the forest, and metaphorically into further dependence upon the forest.

Witchcraft being such an important part of their own lives, the villagers are unable to conceive how the Mbuti can survive without knowledge of the necessary procedures, and as in other instances, they assume control of appropriate situations and provide the procedure. Upon death in a village, for example, the cause of death must be determined, and the cause is usually believed by the villagers to be witchcraft or sorcery. If they do not discover the cause, the witch or sorcerer may continue to kill. The Mbuti have no knowledge of divination of this kind, so it is done for them by the villagers, and the villagers believe that this places the Mbuti in a dependent position. In fact of course it does not, because the Mbuti believe in natural causes rather than supernatural.

Similarly the Mbuti have no need for the concept of witchcraft to enable them to exert social control. They have their own procedures in this respect, but nonetheless they do sometimes use the village concept of witchcraft to regulate relationships with the village, still denying any belief in "witchcraft substance." They are aware, then, of the social value of witchcraft.

VILLAGE SORCERY

While from the Mbuti point of view sorcery is effectively synonymous with witchcraft, from the village point of view sorcery, being quite different, is by its very nature more directly related to the problem of exerting control over the Mbuti. No villager will admit to being a sorcerer, but there is nothing particularly reprehensible in a villager claiming to hire a sorcerer to curse an Mbuti. All he does in fact is to say that he has had a curse laid. (He may go to the local doctor and persuade him to take action, but in that case his action is legal and is not technically "sorcery," though the net result is much the same.) The curse, alleged or actual, is sometimes followed by the sickness or death of the person cursed.¹ But even if it is not, sooner or later some disaster will come to the family or band of the person cursed, and the villagers will claim that this is the result of the curse.

Insofar as the Mbuti consider the two worlds as being apart, and do not feel bound by their own code of forest behavior to behave in

¹ I have known three young Mbuti who were cursed for not having fulfilled a bargain with an Ngwana villager and died within a few months.

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881 excellent effect. They flaunt themselves in public, to the increased
 832 dismay of the villagers.

* 177 The villagers regard the appearance of menstrual blood as a disaster, and as the inauguration of a time of great danger for the girl, her family and, by extension, the whole tribe. She is considered as unclean, and is rigorously secluded and abased. Her family has to undertake a series of purification rituals ending in a feast (the part of the ceremony for which the Mbuti solicit "help"). They also have to discover the cause of the blood, which is believed by the Plains Bira and still by a number of the Forest Bira to be due to intercourse. The girl is questioned as to who caused the blood, and she names the youth on whom she has set her heart. He may acknowledge the blame, whether or not he ever had intercourse with her, and can then resolve the unclean situation by marrying her. If his wishes are otherwise he can deny her accusation and she will have to try elsewhere. The girl's parents will guide her accusations as they think necessary, but the actual extent to which the village *elima* leads thus directly into marriage seems to vary. Sometimes it is sufficient to secure admission of guilt and payment in lieu of marriage. But the villagers seldom try to follow an Mbuti *elima* through its full course; their major concern is that the impurity of the *elima* girls should not touch them.
 C 881 P 881 The provision of the final feast gives them an opportunity, which
 7 177 they do not always take, for supervising the ritual purification of the
 [296] girls by bathing, the cleansing of the *elima* house, and the ritual disposal of all clothing and bedding and utensils used by the *bamelima*. The latter they do generally supervise, as the Mbuti are notoriously loath to part with perfectly good clothing or bedding for such *bulé* reasons, and will try to avoid having them destroyed.

C If anything, the *elima* sets the villagers and the Mbuti apart, rather
 648 than offering any means for drawing them closer together. This is
 881 perhaps because while the *nkumbi* involves the village ancestors and
 881 is in honor of them, and secures their blessing, the village *elima* involves malevolent spirits more than it involves the ancestors. And as
 768 far as the villagers are concerned, evil spirits emanate from the forest.
 182 P 648 The *elima* offers no opportunity to the villagers for placing Mbuti girls under the control of the ancestral spirits; at the most, it offers them a responsibility for freeing them from contamination by the evil spirits. They sometimes voice the opinion that the Mbuti are in league with those spirits emanating from the forest, and rigorously avoid any contact with an Mbuti *elima*.

VILLAGE BELIEF

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MARRIAGE

Marriage, as we have already seen, may involve the Mbuti in village ritual, and even if their Mbuti claim to have been married in the forest according to their own rites, the villagers try to insist on a village ceremony. Their concern is that the marriage shall be protected, as in village society, against disruption. As the Mbuti not only have no system of paying bride wealth but have no wealth that could be paid, the villagers are obliged to supply the wealth they deem necessary to help stabilize the marriage. They say that a marriage without wealth will not last. But as with the *nkumbi*, they feel that the major safeguard they secure by putting the Mbuti through the village ritual is that the marriage then becomes the concern of the tribal ancestors and subject to supernatural sanctions, all of which operate in the interests of the villagers.

An important part of the village ceremony formalizing a marriage between two Mbuti is the admonition given by a number of villagers to both groom and bride, reminding them of their old obligations and telling them of the new. The bride is introduced to her husband's *kpara* and his wife, and is told exactly what the wife expects of her; at the same time she is reminded of her own *kpara* and admonished not to forget where her "relatives" live. In fact, the place that would be occupied by the parents of the bride and groom in a normal village ceremony are, when two Mbuti are being married, occupied by the *kpara*. Each admonition generally ends with a reminder that the tribal ancestors of the villagers have been invoked for their blessings, and the tribe has provided generous feasts for all the relatives of the bride and groom, and wealth to boot, so any infidelity or any breach of the bond will call down supernatural wrath upon the (Mbuti) families of all those concerned.

In the various crises that may face the couple now, it will be all the more important for the villagers to take the necessary ritual precautions, and to investigate any calamity for evidence of witchcraft. Mbuti marriages tend to be somewhat unstable until the first child is born, and indeed are not considered as marriages by the Mbuti until then, separation and the formation of new unions being the rule rather than the exception. The villagers tend to suspect that witchcraft is at work, sometimes suspecting an Mbuti, sometimes another villager. Bad hunting and sickness are considered to be due to witch-

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VILLAGE RELIGION

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defined way, they do not hesitate to return at once to the forest. On the other hand, if they consider the death perfectly natural, they do not want to be bothered with a senseless preoccupation with causes. They know that in the course of the discussion the villagers will find opportunity to raise a number of issues better forgotten, such as unfulfilled obligations, and they are also uneasy at keeping the name of the dead person alive, in this way, for longer than is necessary. The forest procedure would simply be to bury the body, probably by pulling the hut down on top of it, then to abandon the camp and build a new one, never again mentioning the dead person by name.

On one occasion already cited (p. 10), an Mbuti funeral party returning from the grave converted itself into a wedding party. On another occasion, when the Mbuti were in a particularly festive mood and were bent on a long stay in the village, they played along with the witch-hunt even to the point of suggesting a second diviner from another village to check the findings of the first, stretching the proceedings out in this way for nearly a week. This meant that all the "mourners" (and Mbuti from villages up to twenty miles away came to this funeral) had to be fed for that long by the villagers. When the final act was done and the diviner had pointed out the witch that had "caused" the death, the Mbuti became annoyed that the villagers said something would have to be done about it, talking about a propitiation and a cleansing ceremony, with restitution. When the Mbuti saw they could not talk the villagers out of these less popular final rites, they returned to the forest, taking the "witch" with them.

On the few occasions on which I have seen the Mbuti apparently go through with the act until the very end—that is, divining the witch, accusing him or her, trying the case, giving judgment and going through the necessary cleansing rituals and actually making the necessary restitutive payments—it was when they already had a grievance against a certain person and chose this way of expressing it. On each such occasion there was not, among the Mbuti, the slightest thought that the "witch" actually had anything to do with the death. On two occasions the accused was a woman singularly well equipped to appear as a witch, her face being almost entirely eaten away by yaws. She was actually extremely well liked, but nonetheless she belonged to the volatile Cephu family who were always joining and breaking away from the main band, and she was very loud in her comments about that main band. Further, her husband, Aberi, normally also well liked, was particularly quick-tempered and a disturbing element.

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The *molimo* trumpet, which is the Mbuti counterpart of the villager *tsis*, may be heard growling in a noncommittal manner, as if uncertain which clan totem to imitate from the diversity of clans undoubtedly represented at the Mbuti *molimo* fire. It seems that the most common sound for the instrument to make under such circumstances is the growl of a leopard, which safely covers all clans, Mbuti and villager.

However, the villagers are not made welcome, and if it were any but the *kpara* or his representative the *molimo* would be abandoned the moment a villager approached. As it is, on the few occasions when I have seen a *kpara* attend, he was not offered any food or any other inducement to stay, the *molimo* trumpet remained out of sight the whole time and only growled indistinctly once or twice; the singing was sporadic and only the young men were active, dancing around the fire.

The Mbuti said that the villagers were afraid and would not in any case be likely to come near; the *kpara* only did it because he felt obliged to. In all cases of which I have any experience, except two instances where a brief *molimo* was held in a village camp for an Mbuti child who died there, the Mbuti *molimo* is held at nighttime in the forest, where interference from the village would be unthinkable. As with the *elima*, however, the closing stages are often held in the village, this being meant to coincide with the end of the official period of mourning and therefore the signal for a feast to be supplied by the villagers.

It does seem significant, nonetheless, that the Mbuti should sing any *molimo* songs in the village camp, for normally they refuse to sing any of their true forest songs when in the village. However, they are sung infrequently, with marked restraint, and widely separated by long snatches of songs that I never heard in the forest or, unfortunately, in the villages. The latter bore a distinct resemblance to certain songs taught during the *nkumbi*, and some were undoubtedly variants on *nkumbi* songs. The only information I could get was that they were not "songs of the forest" but were "songs of the village." The villagers confirmed that they heard the Mbuti sometimes singing village *molimo* songs, and surprise was expressed that they would sing anything else, for everything else was *bulé*, empty.

The connection between the *molimo*, as performed by the Mbuti in the village, and the *nkumbi* was made all the more evident when on one *molimo* occasion the two members of the *kpara*'s family stood up and performed a dance only seen otherwise in the initiation camp.

VILLAGE RELIGION

On another occasion the *kpara* himself did exactly the same thing. In the first instance the *kpara* was Ndaka, in the second, Bira. The villagers evidently believe that whatever *molimo* ritual the Mbuti have, it was learned from the village, if badly learned and performed with illegitimate variations. As with the *elima*, perhaps also for fear of exposure to the malevolent forest spirits, the villagers do not seek to interfere too much with Mbuti *molimo* celebrations. We shall see that these celebrations are quite divorced from the village *molimo*, regardless of whether or not the origin of the two was common. Also, we shall see that the Mbuti *molimo* has none of the connections that evidently exist between the village *molimo* and the *nkumbi*.

As with the *elima*, the villagers limit the extent of their interest to ensuring the removal, by village-supplied procedure, of the last taints of uncleanness. This they do, again in conjunction with a feast, turning a blind eye to the fact that as many as a dozen different Mbuti "clans" may be represented at what is supposed to be a closed clan feast.

The extent to which the villagers believe they assert supernatural control over the Mbuti does not coincide at all with the extent to which they effectively do exert such control, for the reason that must now be sufficiently obvious; no matter how many or what manner of village institutions the Mbuti adopt, they are adopted into a pre-existing system and no longer have the same interrelationships they do in the village system. The two systems are kept irreconcilably apart by what has in effect been emerging throughout—the existence of two completely different sets of values.

Yet the villagers are not entirely victims of their own *mbafu*, as the Mbuti would have it. There is little else they could do, and the adoption of the Mbuti into one aspect of village social structure would indeed be *bulé* without their adoption into the total structure. The villagers are consistent and logical, and above all it must be remembered that in their own eyes they have achieved what they set out to achieve—control. They believe that ultimate control is theirs because of the force of the supernatural powers on their side, and in point of fact, although it does not work quite the way they think, the concept of supernatural power does give them a small measure of control to the extent that it creates fear.

But what is also achieved is the creation of a myth that completely regularizes the whole situation, as far as the villagers are concerned, affording them an institutionalized means of dealing with every possi-

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ble situation, retaining at all times the village position of superiority over the Mbuti. But it is a myth which at the same time satisfies the needs of the Mbuti, affording them precisely the freedom of which the villagers seek to deprive them, enabling them to rationalize the situation in their own favor and to their own advantage. We shall shortly see how this takes place.

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CHAPTER 7

Flux and Instability

Not yet having examined the forest context, we cannot completely dispose of the question of economic dependence or interdependence. At the moment, it appears that the Mbuti do not need the villagers except for luxuries which may in time become necessities, and it equally seems that the villagers do not need the Mbuti except as laborers on the plantations, in particular with the cotton harvest, and this is a very recent need introduced by Belgian administration. The most that one can say about the economic aspect of the relationship is that it appears to be one of mutual convenience. The villagers *could* hunt (and in areas where there are few or no Mbuti, they do) but they prefer not to go into the forest if it can be avoided. The Mbuti *could* live successfully off the forest at their indigenous level of technology, but trade with the villagers makes life that much easier.

If we look carefully at daily life in any village, the economic aspect of the relationship fades even further into the background. Mbuti can occasionally be seen bringing in from the forest meat or other forest products needed by the villagers, such as the *sito* saplings and phrynum leaves for their houses. More often they will be seen helping with odd domestic chores, such as fetching water or firewood, house-building, or guarding plantations. Mbuti women help the village women pound manioc and to thresh and winnow the locally grown dry rice. They also help the village women carry loads of plantains to and from the market.

But mostly, if any Mbuti are to be seen at all, they will be seen lazing on the *baraza* of their *kpara*, being fed and offered ends of cigarettes, or bribed with liquor to put on a dance that all the villagers will come to watch. Such dances are wild and erotic, accompanied by anything from one to three or four drums, never by song.

It is also possible to see Mbuti scrounging food from villagers

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It is also possible to see Mbuti screwing food from villagers

other than their own *kpara* and, when not successful, simply stealing what they want. If they are caught they are scolded by their *kpara* and that is generally all. If more fuss is made than that, all the Mbuti are likely to pack up and return to the forest within hours. But whatever Mbuti may be seen engaged in whatever activity, they can be seen only as individuals in relationship to a particular villager at that particular moment, unrelated to other villagers and other Mbuti, unless they are included in the same activity. Only in the village camp of the Mbuti, usually at the edge of the plantation, do they form a society, but the interpersonal relationships observable even in a village camp bear little resemblance to relationships in the more strictly village context.

The situation becomes more understandable in light of the expressed Mbuti attitude to their own place in the village world. They refer to the village as being a place for good hunting and good eating. Hunting requires cunning, and particularly when dealing with a "tricky" animal such as the villager, say the Mbuti. The word for "trickery" means more than "clever," it has connotations of supernatural power. So the Mbuti, when hunting in the village, use appropriate tactics, just as they do in the forest. Carrying wood and fetching water, building houses and pounding manioc, are all part of those tactics, and may perhaps be likened to the net with which the Mbuti trap the forest animals.

This Mbuti attitude to the relationship not only fits with the theory that there is, in effect, no necessary economic interdependence, but it also fits well with the suggestion of *apparent* structural incompatibility. Mbuti talk of "eating" the villagers, and indeed the villagers also talk, with some asperity, of being eaten. In Mbuti thought, however, it is rather more literal than it may seem, for the villagers are not only referred to as animals, a common term of abuse, but they are considered as animals. And when one eats an animal one merely consumes its substance, one does not thereby assume its form or its pattern of behavior.

Even supposing that there was a necessary economic interdependence, the daily life of the village in no way reveals any sense of economic urgency. Even in times of crisis, such as the cotton harvest, powerful chiefs like Kachui may evidently find themselves deserted by the Mbuti and forced to make out on their own. But if there were a true economic dependence, then there would have to be a workable economic system, with an associated system of social control; and

FLUX AND INSTABILITY

we have already seen that in place of system and control there is, apparently, only flux and instability that militate against system and control.

By flux I refer to the fact that the Mbuti appear to adopt village institutions but not the village system of interrelationships. In this way there is a disconnectedness in the village context of the Mbuti that enables both sides to refer to whichever institution is convenient at the moment to establish a relationship of the moment. Thus an Mbuti may be asked to help one villager on the ground of their *karé* relationship, and expected by another to help because of the hereditary *kpura* relationship. Considerations of simple economic exchange between the same Mbuti and still other villagers may override either of the above considerations at another moment. Thus the Mbuti has a number of possible ways in which he can link himself with the village and the villagers, at different and distinct times. The converse also applies, and if a villager finds his hereditary claims ineffective he may call on other Mbuti because of the *karé* relationship, and so forth.

In view of the nomadic nature of the hunting band and, as we shall see, of its composition, this "system" of flux is the only one that could possibly pertain. But it leads inevitably to instability because of the consequent lack of any one system of control. In the same way that the Mbuti can hop from one conflicting set of relationships to another, so he can hop from one system of control to another. By Mbuti rejection of the total village system and by what proves to be an opposition of a totally different set of values, the villager ultimately is denied virtually all control, and the Mbuti similarly is denied any absolute security in his relationships with the villagers.

However, the loss of control is more serious to the villagers than is the loss of security to the Mbuti, and it is also more complete, for the villagers are themselves bound by the supernatural sanctions through which they vainly attempt to impose control upon the Mbuti. The whole situation is incompatible with the notion of economic interdependence, yet there is no denying the actual relationship between the two groups of people. Nor can one deny that within a framework of flux and instability, the relationship is persistent, so there must be some system. If that system is so evidently unrelated to economic factors, we have to look elsewhere for its focal point.

There are not all that many basic relationships that can exist be-

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There are not all that many basic relationships that can exist between two peoples in a context such as this. Apart from one of symbiosis, implying interdependence, there could be political subjugation, such as existed, say, between the Tussi and the Hutu. But that is plainly not the case here. The villagers themselves admit their inability to exert physical force to bend the Mbuti to their will, for the Mbuti always have the ultimate escape of flight to the sanctuary of the forest. The villagers are completely unequipped to pursue the Mbuti into the forest, and never attempt it. They are incapable of even finding the Mbuti if the hunters wish not to be found. And, as we have seen, there is no effective political mechanism for maintaining any kind of political relationship, let alone one of superordination/subordination.

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Another possible relationship would be one of assimilation, such as occurred among the Ganda of East Africa, where two different peoples merged, as did their two different economies. At the present there is no question of actual assimilation, but the existence of linguistic and institutional similarities certainly indicates an interchange of ideas, at least. But it is, at the moment, an interchange of outward forms only, and not of the accompanying systems and structure. And while a great deal of intimacy is expressed, in action as in word, between the two groups, there is also a great deal of expressed opposition, and sometimes hostility.

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The intermarriage between Mbuti girls and village men and the attempted absorption of the Mbuti into the village kinship system may be considered as steps toward assimilation, but if so they are very tentative and preliminary steps, and as such need not concern us here. Indeed we shall find that there are other indications of the reverse process, of separation. There is no question of physical separation in the sense of the expulsion of one group by the other, but a perfectly valid alternative relationship left to us for consideration is one of ideological separation accompanied by a mutually accepted territorial separation—a form of indigenous apartheid.

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This in fact seems to be the case, for in common conversation, as in action, both groups distinguish the village and the village people from the forest and the forest people. The Mbuti effectively are the only group to cross the territorial boundaries, and the ideological boundaries remain inviolate on both sides. When the Mbuti cross into the village world they leave the forest behind them, and with it they leave their forest social system. Forest values cannot be so easily left

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122 sleep in the *baraza* of the villagers rather than in the village camp).
182 The nuclear family is further disrupted by the fact that a wife may
621 well seize the opportunity of being in the village to leave her husband
593 and visit her own *kpapa* in another village.
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Men and women of quite different ages who would normally, in
[608] the forest, be separated for most aspects of daily life may find them-
[571] selves thrown together. Young and old are quite likely to find them-
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182 selves eating together on the same *baraza*, helping to build the same
621 house, even joining in the same erotic dance. Sex differentiations that
561 pertain in the forest do not necessarily pertain in the village, where,
462 for instance, Mbuti men do the housebuilding, not the women, and
where the women are most effectively the "hunters" and food pro-
ducers.

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• 648 It is only, as stated, when the two worlds of the forest and the
621 village impinge upon each other that the Mbuti in the village camp
186 show any sense of identity as a unit. Those who belong to the same
hunting band will then cluster together around the same campfire,
and if the issue involves a return to the forest, then quickly the village
camp begins to assume, so far as possible, the composition and char-
acteristics of a forest camp. Forest relationships between individuals
and families are gradually reestablished, and at the same time village
relationships are gradually abandoned. This inevitably meets with
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648 concerted opposition on the part of the villagers, who offer threats
166 and bribes to maintain the precarious and temporary relationship just
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563 established. But with no effective means of control there is nothing
[431] they can do but accept the departure of "their" Mbuti with as much
good grace as they can muster. Those who are wise make presents of
plantains and manioc. Those who do not are likely to have their
plantations robbed.

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533 The imminence of a mass return of Mbuti to the forest is fre-
186 quently marked a night or two before it takes place by the singing
621 in the village camp of hunting songs or, on special occasions, of the
lesser *molimo* songs, late at night when all the villagers will have re-
tired. This is a sure sign that the forest world is asserting itself, for
forest songs are generally considered as sacred, and not to be profaned
by performance in the village. They would never be sung in the true
village, and only in the Mbuti village camp when they wish to convert
the context to a forest context. The forest, it must be remembered,
is physically always within sight and, perhaps more important as far
as song is concerned, within earshot. It may, indeed, be no more than

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a few yards away, and some village camps, depending upon the circumstances, are actually built still in the shade of the forest, out of sight of the village and its plantations.

But granted this separation of the two worlds, and the fact that when the band (or part of it) comes to the village it disintegrates as such, and if we accept the lack of any economic necessity or political force by which we could explain the relationship, we still have to answer the question as to why a relationship exists and what its true nature is.

This can best be answered after we have seen the nature of the forest world, but it can already be seen that the meeting of the two peoples is somewhat like the meeting of two polar opposites that are irresistibly drawn together. And indeed, such magnetic links between opposites are the only true ones we have found. The point at which the forest and the village truly meet, the focal point of the relationship between the two peoples, is not economic or political, but religious. The nature of the meeting is one of opposition, and this opposition is most clearly expressed in the mutually antagonistic systems of values. Although we have only concerned ourselves with the village world to this point, we have already seen the strength of the village fear of the forest, resulting in their unwillingness to enter it and their consequent "dependence" upon the Mbuti for necessary forest products. This fear is expressed in religious terms by reference to the hostile forest spirits, and the general antagonism of the forest to the village world, witnessed by its reluctance to support village crops. Insofar as the villagers recognize the Mbuti as a forest people they believe them to be somehow aligned with the forest spirits, and therefore to be placated. That does not prevent the villagers from attempting, while placating, to extend some form of control over the Mbuti. Indeed they seem far more concerned about this than they are about the small amount of meat or labor they manage to extract from the Mbuti (see Table 3 for an example of "economic" exchange).

The Mbuti most nearly fall under village control through their own fear of the village (which by its very nature is not only not "of the forest" but is actively hostile to the forest), and through their fear of the powers the villagers claim to have over the supernatural, by witchcraft and sorcery. Quite apart from the historic genesis of the Mbuti/Villager relationship, the very antagonism of their ways of life, together with their territorial propinquity, would be enough to de-

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mand that they come to some kind of terms and establish some kind of mechanism for dealing with the threat that each feels.

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We have seen how the villagers attempt to deal with the situation by asserting control over the Mbuti through the adoption of the Mbuti into the village social system, thus placing them under the supernatural sanctions of village society. We have also seen that the Mbuti evade such control, though we have not exactly seen how, for at the moment the success of their evasion seems to lie in the rejection of system, in a flux and instability that alone would lead to chaos.

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In examining the forest society of the Mbuti now, however, we shall see how this flux and apparent instability is in fact a structural factor, and that while the villagers are constantly attempting to absorb the Mbuti into their village social system, the Mbuti have evolved a social system of their own which, while still permitting their traditional hunting and gathering existence, takes this new village factor into consideration and, so to speak, by opposing, ends it. For the Mbuti forest system seems almost expressly designed to run counter to the village system, and, by opposing it at every point of possible structural contact, it makes any structural relationship except one of opposition quite impossible.

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Thus in examining the forest system of the Mbuti we have to remember that the same institution may well have a double function; the one of maintaining cohesion with the forest world, the other of maintaining opposition with the world outside. And insofar as the invasion of the village tribes is relatively recent, this is a system that is still evolving. All the more so because the successive waves of the invasion, followed by the advent of the Arab slave traders and finally by the arrival of the Belgians, have all wrought sudden and drastic changes in the nature of village life and on the village settlement pattern. There may indeed be some institutions that are newly evolved and the purpose of which is directed primarily at maintaining the relationship of opposition between forest and village. Others are in the process of adaptation, notably the Mbuti *molimo*, where the forest system of values has its deepest roots and where, consequently, their opposition to village values must be most forcefully expressed. And some institutions appear to be in a state of atrophy.

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We are, then, very clearly going to be studying a society in the process of change. The structure that will emerge, involving a disconcerting lack of emphasis on kinship, is not necessarily or even probably characteristic of hunting and gathering societies, and should cer-

THE ECONOMY

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exchange with his partner's next of kin. If his partner is within a day's walk or two he may visit him briefly, bringing a suitable gift of meat with him. Even on returning to his *kpara*'s village, an Mbuti may maintain exchange with a generous villager elsewhere.

There is no system of equivalents, only the obligation to reciprocate. Indeed it is doubtful if we can really even talk of it as theft when the Mbuti raid a plantation and carry off what they want, back to the forest, without leaving anything for the villagers, whom they may or may not even know. The villagers recognize their need of the Mbuti if they are to be spared the necessity of going into the forest themselves. They also recognize that the territory, even that on which the village and plantation are built, was formerly, and in a sense still is, all Mbuti territory, and that they therefore have special privileges. When a raid takes place, the established villagers assume that a reciprocal presentation of forest foods, other forest products, or of service will be made at a future date.

On the village side, *kare* and *kpara* relationships may well operate and persist over long periods of time if the individuals are wise and just. If they are not, then the same relationships, in village society, afford an institutional means of regulating the situation with any other villagers with whom the Mbuti may take up. Among the Mbuti no such considerations or mechanisms pertain.

In the latter days of Belgian administration, when increasing demands were made upon the villagers to produce certain cash crops and to supply labor, the villagers found themselves in correspondingly greater need of Mbuti labor to help them with their plantation work. Demands would be made of a whole band to come and camp near the plantation for several weeks on end, to help with the sowing or the harvesting. The demand would be made by the village chief or headman to the appointed "*capita*" or "*sultani*" of the Mbuti band. Once notified, the band then decided the matter by common discussion, any dissenters being free to leave and go their own way without any attached stigma. The considerations involved in arriving at a decision were entirely practical and material, and a decision always stood ready to be reversed at a moment's notice if it was found not to be in the favor of the band.

The work entailed on the plantation in no way involved groups comparable to those formed in hunting or gathering activities; consequently in the village a different set of interpersonal relationships

* These terms derive from the Belgians and the Arab slave traders, respectively.

*177 exists among the Mbuti, and mutual obligations that exist in the for-
571 est are no longer practicable and so are no longer considered as bind-
[39] ing. Generally there is a fractioning into individual family or even
smaller elements, each individual or family having a villager exchange
-177 partner. However, some villagers with larger and more productive
971 plantations, or with other assets (such as the blacksmith), may at-
476 tract a number of Mbuti who thus form a temporary co-operative
group while in the village. Any such bonds formed are purely of the
moment and in that context, and are shed immediately on return to
the forest. For the moment, however, they are real and binding, falling
under village sanctions and even to some extent subject to village
jurisdiction. To this latter, however, the Mbuti only submit so far as
it is convenient. In a case of inter-Mbuti dispute in the village con-
text, the litigants are likely, for personal and individual reasons, to
accept villager arbitration. In the case of a dispute between an Mbuti
and a villager, however, it will be the convenience of the band that is
considered as well as that of the individual.

476 ECONOMIC AUTHORITY

621 Such organization as exists for economic purposes arises in direct
121 response to the immediate demands of the present context. It is con-
stant only as long as the context is constant, and any continuity
derives from contextual continuity, not from any hardening of tradi-
tional arteries or inherited patterns of leadership or behavior. The
only structural aspects of the economy that persist in other realms are
those related to the principles of territory and age.

121 Ecological and technological considerations determine the general
433 pattern of subsistence activities, hunting and gathering; this pattern
438 is modified according to the desire of the Mbuti for village luxuries
*177 or to the pressure put upon them by their villager neighbors. As any
of these considerations changes; so does the pattern. There is no at-
tempt to control or dominate either the geographical or human en-
vironment.

571 Insofar as organization is in the nature of a response, then, leader-
121 ship is minimal, in the economic realm. All major decisions are taken
621 by common consent, as in other realms of Mbuti life. Men and
554 women have equal say, hunting and gathering being equally impor-
177 tant to the economy. Young married couples and youths have the
most to say, being the most active hunters and gatherers, but while
ability as a hunter carries some weight, too much ability may lead to

54 121 The various fields in which we can speak of authority fall into three main categories—economic, ritual, and legal. In the first two, by authority is meant prominence of activity and participation in discussion in what is, generally, a normal situation. In the last category, legal, the situation is abnormal, one of dispute, and by authority is meant prominence in the settling of that dispute. Nowhere does it have any validity unless backed by common assent. Yet it is more than mere influence, for in each field certain classes of individuals are recognized as having the right and ability to interpret the pleasure of the forest.

54 56 562 Table 8¹ indicates the distribution of this "authority" throughout the band. It will be seen that it is evenly divided between the sexes and among all adult age levels; only the children are not accorded any authority except among themselves. Further, authority is located at one age level or another or with the nuclear family, with few exceptions. For the life crises (excluding birth), authority is divided between the youths and the elders. Youths and elders also share responsibility for the camp while the hunt is away, even if some of the hunters remain behind.

54 548 There are many examples of Mbuti who have appeared in the role of leader vis-à-vis the village, but as their authority was nil in relation to forest life, they need not concern us here. Their only function in the forest, other than their normal role as hunters, was to communicate the wishes of the one group of people to the other.

54 56 522 626 627 The only individual who might be recognized as occupying a special political position in the life of the hunting band, on any ground other than age, is the camp clown. He is usually a hunter, and his position is unofficial, depending on his abilities as an actor and a clown. He is not appointed, and there is no special name for him or his position. However, every band seems to have its clown. His function is to act as a buff between disputants, deflecting the more serious disputes away from their original sources, absolving other individuals of blame by accepting it himself. Frequently he will end a dispute simply through the use of ridicule, and although such ridicule may be taken as a form of judgment, the essential point is that once again its objective is to divert attention from the source of the dispute and also to divert blame from anyone who is clearly in the wrong. The major concern of all, except possibly the prime disputants, is that the dispute shall be ended, and frequently by creating or reviving another, lesser dispute the clown brings the disputants into the same frame of mind.

¹[see page 330-- Analyst]

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156 particular asset in the hunt. This was his world. He had little or no interest in the village.

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[595] Njobo, on the other hand, was excellent at dealing with the village and seemingly enjoyed it, for brief periods. He was much closer to the Nambikwara, who "delights in responsibility" and who "finds enough reward in those burdens that their fellows shy away from" (*ibid*).

554 Although his wives were successive, it is worth mentioning that his penultimate wife, mother of his crippled son, was not remarried and
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573 was still considered by all, including Njobo, as his senior wife. Although she lived with her natal band, she sometimes visited Njobo (particularly when he was in the village), and he also visited her, at which times they acted in all respects like man and wife. Njobo refused to allow her to live with him in the forest hunting camps.

156 Njobo's father, Biyonga, had not been outstanding in any way. He
554 had been dead a number of years, and nobody seemed to remember him for any particular qualities.¹ Njobo, on the other hand, was
555 among the finest hunters, and unique in having killed, single-handed,
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[224] four elephants. He had also participated in successful communal elephant and buffalo hunts, and apart from being a hunter of the utmost courage, he was also a man of the utmost integrity. He possessed, in abundance, all those qualities the Mbuti admire most except a good singing voice. He himself was modest, and usually self-effacing in the hunting camp. He came to the fore in relations with the village, and

• [448] frequently acted as "headman" of the band in that respect. However,
156 if ever he spoke too loudly in camp, he was either shouted down or
152 laughed at; ridicule he accepted and even welcomed. I only heard him
554 make a retort once, when reference was made to his son's inability to walk without a stick. He said, "It is never good for one man to talk too much, particularly if he is right. But if an Mbuti has something to say, what else can he do?"

156 Njobo had no brothers, but his sisters had produced a number of
604 children, several of whom, married and single, were members of the
596 same band. The only sister who was in the band was a widow, and her children were elsewhere. She acted as mother to all her nephews and nieces, among which were two youths, cousins to each other, and each recently married. When Njobo was away from the band for a

¹ Although there was a general reluctance to mention the dead by name, or even to talk about them, there was no rigid prohibition. It was a question more of there being no particular occasion for such mention. If Biyonga had been exceptional in any way, it would certainly have arisen sooner or later in ordinary conversation, and equally certainly in response to questioning.

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renown, the man with a troublesome trio of wives, himself a frequent cause of friction in the camp. Shaking his finger at Ekianga, Moké said, "And that is a man, completely clean. He pleases my spirit [roho] very much."

After the evening meal Moké stood in the middle of the camp and pointed to the hearth of each great hunter and male elder in turn, naming them, and saying, "This is my man, this is my hearth, for it is his hearth; but it is not Asuku's." He even pointed over to Cephú's camp, and included Cephú. He then went back to his hut, leaving Asuku at the central fire with two elders.

Despite this display of disaffection, however, Asuku remained on. He had not only been pointed at, but named in public, and another had been named as good while he had been named as bad—a double disgrace. Ridicule, after this, was pointless, and although everyone wanted to be rid of Asuku, their respect for Njobo, coupled with Njobo's continued absence, prevented them from doing more than ignoring the offender as far as possible. After some three months, however, Asuku began to frequent the village for long periods. Although this meant he was at least not in the camp, which was thereby much improved, the hunters found this the ultimate insult and disloyalty. When he refused a summons to return to the hunting camp, old Moké once again stood in midcamp, an honored position from which any Mbuti, young or old, is free to claim the attention of everyone. He said that since now Asuku had become a villager, he was no longer an Mbuti, no longer "ours"; he belonged far away, very far away indeed. Pointing to the central fire in the section of the camp that included Njobo's wife and three great hunters, and divers others both related and unrelated, he said, "This is a matter of the forest. This is our hearth. It is Njobo's hearth. It is not Asuku's hearth. He belongs in the village or completely and absolutely far away."

There were murmurs of assent from everyone, and Moké looked around to each individual hearth, asking, "Is my spirit [roho] right?" Agreement was unanimous, though subdued, and Moké simply said, "Asi-to"—"It is finished." The next day word was sent by a youth to Asuku's father, in the territory of Effundi Somali, a few miles on the far side of the Epulu. I was told that the youth simply gave a verbatim account of what had happened. Asuku never returned to the Epulu band, and left the village, returning to his father's territory.

His cousin, Mbaaka, was not such a stranger in the band, but soon after his marriage, and some six months after the Asuku episode, he

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meaningless trivia. Such disputes I have put in a class by themselves, though wherever a deeper underlying dispute was known to have lain behind an apparently trivial dispute, it has been classified accordingly. ⁶²⁷₅₇₈

DISPUTES CONCERNING FOOD

1. A mortar was borrowed by Njobo's sister, Teningbengé, from Amaloku, Amabosu's wife. There is no kin relationship. Teningbengé's subsequent cooking did not please her son (Maipé, actually her nephew), who complained that the mortar must have been dirty. Amaloku, who by then had retrieved the mortar, said that on the contrary it was the food put into the mortar that was dirty, and not the mortar itself. Maipé promptly seized a log of wood and started fighting with Amabosu. Amaloku and Teningbengé fought with sticks. Amabosu's mother, Sau, joined the fight, against her daughter-in-law's oldest sister, old Asofalinda. The dispute remained thus confined and was watched with much enthusiasm and laughter by the rest of the camp until Ekianga, brother to Amaloku and Asofalinda, stepped in and stopped the fighting by seizing the sticks and logs and throwing them away. Everyone returned to his hut and continued the evening meal. ²⁵²₁₅₂
₅₇₈ [26]

2. Masisi, a great hunter, complained that the hunting was bad and said the band should move to the village and eat there. His cousin, Manyalibo, moved to midcamp and began a tirade against Masisi and everyone else for always complaining there was not enough food. He cited ten antelope caught that morning as evidence of the good hunting, and said that everyone should be happy and should be making the forest happy by singing, with so much food. And if they wanted more food they should hunt more and make the hunt even better. He said that if Masisi's noise continued he was going to leave. ²²⁴₅₇₈

Moké then took his place and quietly told everyone that nobody should leave for anywhere, that nobody could deny that the hunt was reasonably good, and that therefore the forest was pleased. If they moved or made too much noise it would be displeased. The forest would be happy if the whole band were to set out the next day on the biggest hunt of all. Then when the weather was better (it had been raining for some days, always a cause of discontent and discomfort) and nobody was making a noise, the whole band could move wherever it liked (knowing that in such a mood it would move fur- ²²⁴₅₇₈
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₆₄₈ [178] [321] [152] [166] [648]).

ther away from the village, and thus further away from a source of friction).

There was no singing, but it was done as Moké suggested. Murmurs of assent came from all over camp, with both Masisi and Manyalibo agreeing loudly.

3. Particularly at the beginning of the honey season, when tendencies to fission are already well marked, disputes over food, particularly over hunger attributable to poor hunting, are made occasions for enlarging the rift between the camp segments. Thus one day old Tungana's younger son, named after his distant relative Njobo, came flying back from the hunt in hot pursuit of his wife, Nakoranja. Nakoranja, much to everyone's surprise, had lost her bark cloth and was holding a leaf in front of her private parts, occasionally removing it to emphasize her cry of "I am naked!"

Having made her point she disappeared into her hut and modestly continued her description as to how her husband had torn her bark cloth off to shame her because she wanted to join her "sister" (who was a member of another segment), Ekianga's youngest wife. Young Njobo, standing outside the hut, told the camp that his wife was useless on the hunt, that she could not run as fast as even the slowest animal and let them all escape. Now they had no food and they would be hungry all day. Evidently she could not run as fast as her husband either, for he had caught her and given her a sound beating, ripping off her bark cloth when she tried to escape. He did not deny this, and Nakoranja said that this entitled her to pack up and leave.

Evidently this was something that had been brewing for some time, and when the hunt came back and it was seen that the dispute was forming along the line of fission, Tungana intervened and said that there was no sense in everyone making so much noise, that the next day he and his wife were going to leave for the village, and that young Njobo and Nakoranja were coming with them to look after them. The discussion immediately turned to the dangers of the trail, with the two segments siding with each other in common and equally insincere but polite opposition to Tungana's suggestion.

4. At a later stage, when fission became inevitable, discontent being so high that the sections were not uniting in the hunt and therefore not getting any meat, old Moké intervened. He stood in midcamp and harangued each section in turn, facing it and naming its members. He emphasized that this was the honey season and that hunting should be stopped anyway, and everyone go to the forest in search of their honey trees, "you in this direction, you in that."

754 11. Sau was the mother of Amabosu, who had exchanged sisters
578 with Ekianga. Sau was regarded by the villagers as a dangerous witch,
a role she filled with zeal and which the Mbuti found useful in two
ways. It provided them with a scapegoat in the forest just as it was a
handy excuse for any misadventure in the village. In either situation
the latent dramatic possibilities appealed enormously to the old lady's
histrionic susceptibilities. One day Sau asked the wife of Mbaaka, a
nephew of Njobo, for some food. She was refused. That night she
[535] did a little dance in front of Mbaaka's hut, her usual way of showing
[224] her displeasure. The next day, on the hunt, Masisi's son was about to
run in bare-handed to catch a sharp-toothed *sindula* (chevrotain), but
Amabosu persuaded him to take his spear. He did so, and then col-
lided with Mbaaka, spearing him in the side.

There was actually some bad feeling between Amabosu and
Mbaaka, and in case this was brought up (making it seem that
Amabosu had deliberately caused his injury) the discussion of the
incident was quickly turned to the refusal of Mbaaka's wife to give
Sau food. She thus became the prime target for blame, with Sau act-
ing as a secondary scapegoat, being criticized for dancing her "bad
dance" outside Mbaaka's hut. In case anyone should take it too se-
riously, Manyalibo promptly started making fun of Sau's dance, flap-
ping his hands to imitate Sau's pendent breasts. This was taken up by
the children, who would not be content until Sau herself gave a dem-
onstration.

626 That evening several hunters stood in midcamp* and said what a
683 good camp it was, and commented on the good hunting. No further
word was said about the spearing, except in the village, where the
648 respective *kpara* went to the tribunal to effect reconciliation (between
571 themselves) and blood payment. Amabosu's *kpara* agreed to pay sixty
608 francs to Mbaaka's *kpara*, Masisi's *kpara* paying only forty. This news
[186] caused great hilarity in the camp, and the comment that villagers were
626 animals, always "eating" each other. Between the Mbuti themselves I
683 could find no evidence of blood payment of any kind, though any
incident involving the drawing of blood is bound to provoke discus-

[685] failure to share in time of need is considered a far greater crime than is petty (i.e., indi-
[627] vidual) theft.

* The importance of the "midcamp" position is that it defines the viewpoint of the
[621] person talking. An individual talking from his own hearth talks as an individual. If he
[156] talks from midcamp he is taking a band rather than an individual point of view. Similarly
the *kumamolimo* is central, but more restricted in area and viewpoint, being used as a
vantage point to discuss with the whole band matters pertaining to the *molimo*.

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29. A girl returning from the village related how there was an administrator there who took her photograph. Masisi demanded the money, and the girl said she did not ask for any. Masisi's wife said the girl was a fool, that she could have got fifty francs. In fact, she was a thief because she deprived everyone of cigarettes. The girl was still standing up where she arrived in camp, and Masisi's wife went up and forced her to sit down, and thrust her private parts into the girl's face as a gesture of contempt. The girl's parents said nothing.

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30. A man burped loudly during the evening meal, and brought forth insults from all sides that would have developed into a fight had Moké not taken the *banja* sticks and started beating them, a sign for the *molimo* singing to begin.

31. A girl, decorated with leaves stuck in her bark cloth, was dancing vigorously and some of the leaves kept falling out. She blamed the younger children and started beating them until they fled, crying. Nobody interfered.

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32. Amabosu, for no known reason, refused to allow his wife to move the fire from their hearth when changing camp. She went to her brother's hut and sat there sulking for nearly a whole day. Amabosu, fed by his mother, paid no attention.

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33. Occasionally, however, even the most trivial origins can lead to a serious and lasting rift. Such a dispute, described more fully in *The Forest People* (Chapter 6), involved two brothers, Aberi and Masalito. It started when Masalito went to visit his brother on a rainy day. Masalito was in the main camp, Aberi in Cephu's camp. Aberi was asleep, and his wife insulted Masalito twice, first by refusing to smoke the same pipe, second by offering him an old and dirty pipe-stem to take back to the main camp with him. This led to a fight between the two brothers which was temporarily healed by the force of ridicule levelled against Aberi, and further subdued by the action of the *molimo* in beating Masalito's hut as a sign of the displeasure of the forest.

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However, the bad feeling remained, if hidden, until Aberi's death.

DISPUTES CONCERNING THEFT

Theft, apart from the kind practiced by Pepei, was unknown except in the village context. Sometimes when Pepei was caught he was thrashed; on the other hand, sometimes he was tolerantly laughed at and allowed to go his way. There was once, however, a curious case that was never settled.

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self being maneuvered into an awkward situation may suddenly leave altogether and go somewhere else. Neither lineal seniority nor political authority (chieftainship) are ever even mentioned in any attempt to influence a family's movement. When Manyalibo and Masisi, who shared the same grandfather (Manyalibo being the lineal elder), fell out and moved into separate camps, it was Masisi who took the initiative, and although Manyalibo claimed that Masisi ought to respect him because of age, he never suggested that Masisi was subject to his authority. He even stated openly that Masisi had the right to move wherever he wanted, but that it was not good for "brothers" to separate. 628
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Thus interfamily exchange can only be regarded as a direct relationship between two families which, if they happen to be in separate bands, creates a relationship between their respective bands allowing for further such interchanges. Such bands respond to each other's needs with regard to optimum economic size, occasionally cooperate, and possess an additional mechanism for the settlement of interband disputes concerning trespass or marriage exchange. 628
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BAND TO VILLAGE

In examining relationships between the band and the village we find the same distinction, only more clearly made, between formal and informal relationships that are the most effective. 648
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But whereas even latent antagonism between bands is minimal, there is considerable latent antagonism between band and village, manifest not only in opposed systems of economic exploitation but also in opposed systems of values. Open conflict would bring advantage to neither group, and we have to think, in view of the lack of necessary economic interdependence, of the exchange in connection with this antagonism. It does indeed offer each group ample opportunity for insulting the other, though individual exchange relationships sometimes remain amicable, and even intimate, for considerable lengths of time.

The outward objective, at least, of the general Mbuti/Villager relationship is one of economic exchange, for mutual convenience. There are a number of formal levels at which such exchange, and the necessary associated negotiations, may be conducted, using a corresponding number of media:

Mbuti

Congo-Kinshasa FOI

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1. Band/Village: *capita*/Chief
2. Lineage/Lineage: Lineage elder/*Kpara*
3. Individual/Individual: *Karé*/*Karé*

We shall deal with each in turn to determine the formal nature of the relationship, and the degree to which it is effective.

Capita/Chief

The relationship of the band as a whole to the village as a whole would be a simple and effective one if the band were, as the villagers claim it should be, a unilineal entity based on the principle of patrilineal descent. However, as we have seen, the band is generally composite, and in any case its composition is constantly changing. Sheer territorial propinquity, however, encourages a relationship of economic exchange between these two units, regardless of the composition of either. Generally speaking there is no need for the village to relate to the band as a whole, food exchange being more easily effected at an interfamilial or interpersonal level. However, under the foreign economic pressures mentioned earlier, at certain times villages found it necessary to have the massed help of all the Mbuti they could muster. In such a case the village Chief summoned the Mbuti *capita* and made his wishes known. The *capita* relayed these wishes to the band, which then did whatever it thought expedient, after general discussion.

The *capita* seems to assume more importance as an institution in the villages of the archer area, to the east of the Epulu. However, even there the villagers themselves admit that the institution is foreign to the Mbuti. I have not once heard it claimed otherwise, by Mbuti or villagers. Among the archers, as among the net-hunters, old men and women are accorded respect, but they have no authority and their area of influence is limited in accordance with their age, and does not include the village. Such elders, then, have no more say than any other Mbuti concerning village matters pertaining to the band as a whole. But village affairs do not fall within the province of any age group, and the *capita* finds himself having to deal separately with each family, if indeed he takes that much trouble at all. Sometimes he may do so if a villager accompanies him to the camp in the hopes of adding strength to the village argument. I have seen this happen among the archers as among the net-hunters, in each case with a direct plea for all Mbuti to go to the village to help with the cotton harvest.

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Usually the *capita* first made a plea from midcamp, and was listened to silently, but without respect and without reply. He then went from family to family, and from each family, despite the presence of the villager, received an emphatic and final negative answer. If the villager is not present on such an occasion, either the *capita* will act the clown as he delivers his message, or both he and his message will be ridiculed by others; there is, if anything, a greater chance of his achieving something for the village under such circumstances. P
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Respect for age is not conveyed upon the *capita* when acting in that capacity. Not only is he ridiculed, but if he persists in his efforts on behalf of the village, even his juniors, family members or otherwise, will combine to "shut his teeth." In areas where the occasional wealthy tourist passes by, the Mbuti regard him as they regard villagers, as animals to be eaten, and the *capita* fills the same role, but generally with more success for the rewards are usually more immediate and satisfying to all concerned. In other respects the situation is parallel to that of the village. P
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The difficulty is no less, even if the Mbuti are already in the village. If the villagers try to exert pressure on them as a band through the *capita*/Chief relationship, this precipitates an immediate return to the forest because the men will not even discuss the matter in the village. Their return may just be for purposes of discussion, but it may also lead to the return of the entire band. The men seem to regard it primarily as their province, the village, in a sense, being a hunting area calling for skill and courage, rather than a gathering area, and they explain their action in these terms, allowing that their wives could come if they really had something to say. P
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The band/village relationship, then, is not to be considered as highly effective, though there are times when the Mbuti find it expedient to act in concert in this way.

Lineage Elders/Kpara

The relationship of an Mbuti lineage to a village lineage is a little more effective, for while a band cannot be recognized as a unilineal entity, there are within it divers lineal units. One or more of these may well occupy a hereditary relationship with a village lineage, the head of which would be the *kpara*. They have no name for the head of their lineage except "old man," the term by which the villagers also refer to him. C
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As stated earlier, this relationship may be exceptionally cordial,

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throughout his life. It is also a question of friendship with the vil-
lager, but for him the relationship is further compelled by his belief
in his own tribal lore, a compulsion not felt by the Mbuti. The Mbuti
sometimes exploit this relationship with a *karé* as they may also do
with their *kpara* for whom they feel no friendship, knowing that
the strength of tribal lore, and the fear of supernatural sanctions upon
themselves, will bring at least a grudging response.

Although essentially an individual relationship rather than a band
relationship, failure on the part of an Mbuti to respond to his *karé*
is considered by the villagers as a violation of village law, and can be
made into a lineage/lineage or a band/village issue, but with predict-
able lack of success because of the absence of any effective agency of
control. However, the attempt is sometimes made, and the band may
at least be held responsible, in violation of *karé* brotherhood, for the
actions of one of its members.

None of these formal relationships, then, brings about much ef-
fective economic exchange, and the political relationship is corre-
spondingly ineffective. The mechanisms for political relationship are
there, but their use is made impossible by the whole process of flux in
Mbuti society. At the best those mechanisms are taken up and used
momentarily when it is found to be mutually advantageous.

Individual Economic Relationships

There is, however, the last level, that of the nuclear family to the
nuclear family, by which the band relates to a village. This is the
effective level at which the bulk of economic exchange takes place
among the Epulu Mbuti, and among most other net-hunting bands
I have seen. In view of the flux that characterizes Mbuti society, it is
indeed the only level that could provide any realistic basis of rela-
tionship.

It may not even necessarily be a family-to-family relationship. In-
dividual members of the Mbuti family may go their own way and
relate as such to village individuals. But once formed, these relation-
ships are likely to remain fairly constant, for as long as the Mbuti
family is hunting within that territory, or within reasonable reach.
Several such attachments might be formed by the Mbuti, though
generally not more than one in any one village. This leads to effective
economic exchange but it provides no basis whatsoever for relating
the band to the village, and it offers the villagers no more opportunity
for control than they already have; namely, the fondness of the Mbuti
for village luxuries.

601 Another important aspect of the terminology is that it does not
602 differentiate between cognates and affines, and is used to include all,
without any distinction of this kind. In an Mbuti hunting band, a
hunter may well have a uterine brother hunting to one side of him
and his uterine sister's husband to the other side. He depends on
each equally for both success and for safety, and any preferential be-
havior, such as might be signified in another form of terminology,
[621] must be avoided. To distinguish between cognates and affines in the
daily hunting and camp life of the Mbuti, as to distinguish between
matriline and patriline, or even between kith and kin, on any grounds
except age and locality, is not only needless, it is destructive of the
sense of unity that is vital to the close cooperative nature of Mbuti
economic and political life.

601 Mbuti personal terminology, as in the more conventional kinship
602 systems, equally reflects interpersonal bonds, then, but they clearly
571 cut across all strictly kinship considerations. This can to some extent
621 be construed as a denial of kinship ties, and it certainly implies that
such ties do not form the basis of social organization in the band.

• [648] But it is better expressed as a lack of concern for kinship that, what-
ever its origins, is particularly well suited to one of the band's major
objectives, the preservation of the greatest possible political distance
between itself and the village. It will be readily seen that whereas

[182] lineage considerations would divide the Mbuti, the generational sys-
tem, if considered vertically, effects the widest possible classificatory
unity from which the villagers are absolutely excluded. But for the
moment to keep to the forest context, the same unity is in perfect
consonance with the nonlineal nature of the band, the unity of which
any lineal system would destroy. Here we have to refer to one other
usage of the same personal terminology; namely, when the Mbuti
refer to themselves as *bamiki ba ndura*, the children of the forest.

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[829] This, together with their habitual reference to the forest as mother
and father, extends the nuclear-family model to incorporate the larger

601 père, père des pères; ou bien on se sert de termes qui remontent à certaines représenta-
152 tions mythiques, et dont le nombre est très élevé." ("Names attributed to the Godhead
778 fall into two categories. Either one simply invokes the name *afa*, *bapapa* or *odu* . . .
father, grandfather, or father of fathers . . . or else one uses terms that derive from
mythological beings, of which there are a very great number.")

This indicates the same filial attitude to the forest that I found among the net-hunters.
Among the archers, I myself most frequently heard *afa*, used with the same degree of
affection as *ema* or *eba*. However, among the archers I equally often heard the forest
(God) addressed as *ema* (mother), rarely heard *bapapa*, and never *odu*. My participa-
tion in the religious life of archer bands, however, was limited.

PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIZATION (2)

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Despite all of which, and the lack of structurally significant rules of inheritance of property or status (names sometimes being handed on down to alternate generations, but not necessarily so), and with no apparent concomitant inheritance of status, certainly not of property, there is a recognition of the patrilineage, and a tendency toward patrilocality.³

2. AGE is the prime factor in dividing the band into significant units, the significance being seen in terms of domestic, economic, legal and governmental responsibilities. Each age level has a distinct role that contributes to the total social order, and in all these aspects of life it is consistently of greater import than kinship. The consistency still remains as firm in religious life, and following the ultimate crisis of death. The dead belong, as it were, to yet another age level, and one that is almost dissociated from the four levels of the living. Thus after death there is no familial concern for the dead, as seen in the complete lack of concern with ancestral ghosts. Far from disclaiming the dead relatives through fear⁴, the Mbuti continue to regard them with affection insofar as they regard them at all. Their preference for forgetting the dead reflects an attitude toward death, not to the individual dead.

Each age level has its own way of earning the respect of the band as a whole, by fulfilling what is referred to as its "duty." Thus the duty of children is to grow up in good health. The duty of youths is to sing, flirt and play—and help the parental level. The duty of the hunters is to hunt and, oddly enough, to create *akami*, or noise, and the duty of

³ We have to assert that there is, for the moment, no evidence that the territorial band is a product of special considerations, as suggested by Steward and Service (in whose terminology the band is "composite"). In particular we must reject, for the Mbuti, the assertion of Service (1962, p. 49) so convenient to his argument for virilocality, that all such societies were, before they were "so thoroughly subjugated," characterized by fighting between "unrelated groups," resulting in "fears, dangers and enmities." Also it is necessary to deny his assertion that such societies are "enclaved among more powerful neighbours—and cannot but lose or be heavily punished for any breach of the peace." If anything, in the Ituri, it is the villages that are enclaved. Further gross misrepresentation, perhaps owing to paucity of reliable material, is offered by Service (1962, p. 108) in the bald statement: "The composite band, on the other hand, is obviously a product of the near-destruction of aboriginal bands after contact with civilization. In all cases there is conclusive evidence of rapid depopulation by disease which, when combined with ending of hostilities among the aborigines themselves under the dominance of the common enemy, resulted in the merging of previously unrelated peoples." The evidence now available, while not denying the possible validity of such historical reconstruction, in no way supports it. Indeed, there is evidence to the contrary.

⁴ For an example of precisely the opposite situation, see Beattie (1960, p. 76), where concern for kinship obligations during life is continued after death, resulting in a desire to disavow relationships.

561 the elders is to restore *ekimi*, or quietness, and also, following their
88 alternate generation, to play and sing, if in a somewhat different manner. The elders may also flirt.

Above all, each age level has its own responsibility in the total band economy.

621 3. TERRITORY is the principle by which the band, divided horizontally by age, sees its unity vertically, through all four generational
561 levels. Territory, represented by the hearth, recognizes the divisions
[594] of the band from the nuclear family, represented by the family hearth, to the four age levels, represented by the different hearths at the *kumamolimo*, for youths, hunters and elders (children remaining by the family hearths). Territory, represented by an area enclosed by
621 recognizable boundaries, defines and is the symbol of unity of
131 the band. In its widest extension, the forest itself, territory forms the basis for the unity of all Mbuti in their common opposition to the village world. The village world is frequently referred to as *indenji aku*,
• [648] or in the lingua franca, KiNgwana, as *inchi ingina*—directly translated as “another territory.” Each band has its own *indenji*, and inter-marriage between noncontiguous bands is preferred because of the rights it conveys, each to the other’s territory. The Mbuti themselves say it is good to have relatives (friends) in many camps, for then one
[92] never “walks emptily” (*tamba bulé*). One of the great *molimo* songs is “*me tamba bulé*”—“I am walking emptily.” The importance lies not
628 in the initial or future residence of the married couple, but in the
602 exchange relationship established by their marriage, enabling individuals or families of each band to exchange visits with members of the other, never having to “walk emptily.”

621 For the Mbuti territory in its widest aspect, as the forest, also represents the spiritual source of their entire being, and effectively operates as the ultimate sanction of social behavior.
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822 4. NOISE, or *akami*, is another element of structural significance, and must be considered in relation to its counterpart, *ekimi*—quiet. Noise is recognized as having considerable practical significance, such as its effect in scaring away animals. This can be desirable or undesirable, depending on the situation, and so can noise be desirable or otherwise. Ultimately, however, noise kills, and so generally is to be avoided. It may be used in times of danger or crisis for protective purposes, and apart from shouting to frighten away wild animals while on the trail, the Mbuti also whistle to stop all human sound, in

PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIZATION (2)

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Let us look, then, at these same structural elements, having just considered them in their forest context, and place them in a village context.

1. THE TERRITORIAL BAND, while in no way lessening the efficiency of the hunting band, and while still preserving band unity through the concept of territory and the use of an age-level system, presents to the village system only disunity and flux. The flux that is a natural part, it seems, of the seasonal fission and fusion of all Mbuti bands renders it next to impossible for any form of village authority to be exerted over the Mbuti, either as bands or as individuals. The preference of the Mbuti for marrying into distant bands, and of thenceforth maintaining an exchange of visits and even of membership with these bands, directly counters the authority of the villagers, which is based on localized lineages and is therefore itself localized. The Mbuti are as likely as not to exchange visits with each other over distances that exceed not only the territorial limits of the clans of the village tribes but even of the tribes themselves, between which there are no political relationships except hostility. In view of the lengths to which the Mbuti carry the joking relationship, if it can be called that,⁶ it is not surprising that they find it convenient to maintain their bands in such constant and otherwise unnecessary flux. The Mbuti constantly raid village plantations, openly ridicule the villagers, and steal from under their noses, unless the villagers are particularly generous. I have not met a single villager, even among those most popular with the Mbuti, who has not complained of being "eaten," and complained at the same time of the impossibility of applying legal sanctions over tribal boundaries.

2. AGE divides the hunting band into significant horizontal sections crosscutting all lineal considerations.⁷ The emphasis on age is con-

⁶ The Mbuti in their own parlance regard the village as a place to hunt and eat. They say "in the forest we hunt, in the village we hunt" (*subandura su wendi, subananyi su wendi*), also, equally frequently, "We eat animals, we eat villagers" (*Sule banyamba, sule Batubanyi*). Hunting calls for trickiness, cunning, using tactics appropriate to the game, often imitating it and assimilating, temporarily, its personality. Such tactics in the village include bringing in a certain amount of meat as bait, performing some service, and occupying a generally subservient position. When asked why he forced his son to take part in the *nkumbi* initiation at the hands of the villagers, one father said, simply, "When we hunt elephant we cover ourselves with elephant dung" (*Su wendi bambongu su pati mavi nda'bo*).

⁷ Turner (1957), following Gluckman (1954), finds among the Ndembu, a society that is mobile and fissionable, also lacking the more formal political institutions, an essential crosscutting of opposed groups. He also found, as we have found, that (Turner 1957, p. 289) "... links of kinship and of political and economic co-operation per se

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WAYWARD SERVANTS

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563 ing the Mbuti, are not only trying to subject the Mbuti to the authority of village supernatural sanctions but are also trying to assimilate from the Mbuti some of the spiritual power they believe to reside in the forest.

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* 177 The ultimate nature of the relationship between the two people
105 cannot be determined until further studies have been made of similar
621 situations from both the Mbuti point of view and, a major need at the
• 648 moment, from the village point of view. For now, it seems sufficiently clear that the general nature of the relationship is one of opposition, and that Mbuti society, in response to the demands of the situation or by fortuitous chance, meets it with an organization based upon the very antithesis of village organization. Against political centralization
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[621] it offers complete decentralization and diffusion of authority. Against a sedentary, patrilineal, patrilocal village it matches the nomadic, nonlineal, territorial band. The vertical village kinship system is countered by a horizontal age-level system. Village values are directly opposed by forest values. And within itself Mbuti society uses these same principles, in a state of almost perpetual flux, to maintain a cohesion fully as powerful as that found among the villagers. Instead
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[181] of looking to the more conventional structural principles for the source of unity of Mbuti society, we have had to look rather to values, and it is in terms of values that the over-all society, of Mbuti and villagers, has its ultimate being and significance.

THE PLAY WORLD OF THE BAMBUTI

form that enables them in a moment to know the exact number¹⁷⁷
thrown down. And for another the villagers are not so nimble as the⁵²⁵
Pygmies. When a Pygmy sees that he is going to lose by a couple^[151]
of beans, he quickly drops them from the store he has concealed
between his fingers, or even in his hair, thus by a triumphant jerk
of his hands or his head throwing in the winning beans.

The villagers left that camp stripped of their fish, their tobacco,
and whatever else they had to gamble away, and they soon came
to prefer an alternative route that by-passed our camp.

There are a few villagers that are welcome in a Pygmy camp, but¹⁷⁷
they are rare. Others can come with sackloads of food and still get¹⁸⁶
a cold reception. I have seen this happen; as soon as the Pygmies⁵⁷⁴
have divided up the food they send the villagers on their way. But
others can come empty-handed and be received gladly, because they
understand the Pygmies and the forest. For the Pygmies this is the^[828]
criterion of a "real person," as opposed to the animal-humans who
live in permanent villages out in the open, away from the shelter
and affection of the trees.

Any visitations by villagers are temporary, and they usually have⁶⁴⁸
some political significance. A Negro chief who wants to win more¹⁷⁷
Pygmies to his village may send out a son with gifts to stay in a
Pygmy camp. Every day more gifts and food are sent out so that
he can distribute these. It is a risky business because, as the villagers
say, "The BaMbuti eat us up until we have nothing left for our-
selves!" But if a chief's son wins the affection of the Pygmies, his
father will have won a steady supply of meat—for a time, anyway.

One afternoon I saw two village girls arrive, followed by two¹²³
servants who threw down loads of plantains and sweet bananas, and¹⁷⁷
a sack of manioc flour. The servants left and the girls came over and^[262]
sat down unconcernedly at Masamba's fire. Masamba came out of^[521]
her hut and greeted them with warmth, and soon a number of

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521 women gathered around, chattering away gaily and asking for news of the village.

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[576] The girls were Amina, daughter of an important BaBira subchief, and her cousin. Her father was hoping, she said, that she might be allowed to stay for a few days and bring him back some meat. She obviously knew the Pygmies well, because without waiting to be asked she distributed the plantains. She said she would keep the manioc flour until the meat began to come in. Apparently she was well liked, because as soon as people heard of her presence they came over to shake her hand, in the manner of villagers, grasping each other's wrists. Kenge told me all about her, and said that her father was one of the least animal-like villagers. He asked me which of the two girls I thought looked the more attractive. I said Amina, without a doubt. She was the most beautiful girl I had seen in a long time; the BaBira are by no means noted for their good looks. Amina was tall and a warm brown in color. She carried herself with the inborn grace of Bantu women; her eyes were deep and thoughtful; her expression was kind and gentle. Yes, she was certainly the more beautiful of the two. Kenge nodded thoughtfully and changed the conversation.

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[372] That night I sat up late with the men, and when I went back to my hut I was surprised not to see any bachelors sleeping on the floor as they usually did. But three logs were placed beside the bed and were glowing cheerfully. I sat down on the edge of the bed and found, as I had expected, that Kenge had curled up in my blanket. He was considerate enough, on such occasions, not to take my blanket onto the floor, but rather to take half of the bed. So I crawled in beside him and was about to say something when I realized that the body beside me was considerably taller than Kenge, and very differently shaped. It was Amina.

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It was a difficult moment, but I could see the whole situation at once. I had become the center of a nice political maneuver. The

THE PLAY WORLD OF THE BAMBUTI

chief had sent his daughter to win the Pygmies, not by her gifts of plantains and manioc flour, but by winning me. The Pygmies, anxious to get what they could out of the situation, liking Amina anyway, but having some consideration for me, got Kenge to find out which of the two girls I preferred. That, evidently, was to be the limit of my choice in the matter. I confess I was glad I had chosen Amina, but I could see all sorts of difficulties arising if I were to take advantage of the situation. No doubt the chief had in mind the considerable bride-wealth he could demand should, by any chance, his daughter bear a mulatto child. Still, it was good of him to send his prettiest daughter.

I considered for a minute or two and then said, "Amina," very quietly. It had begun to rain, and I half hoped she would not hear me. It would be a terrible disgrace to her—and to me—if I turned her out, but I wanted no part of a lengthy and costly dispute over bride-wealth. But Amina was by no means asleep. She laughed lightly and made fun of my KiNgwana name, which means "the long one." So I said, "Amina!" once more, a little more sharply, still trying to think what a supposed gentleman and scholar should do in such circumstances. But Amina was not helping. She just snuggled closer and said, "Yes, tall one?" Then in a moment of inspiration I simply said, "Amina, the roof is leaking." And with masculine authority I added, "Get up and fix it."

Without a word she got up and started searching for the leak, pulling at the leaves until a steady trickle of water came down, splashing on the floor beside the bed. By the time she had repaired the damage and checked the whole roof with womanly efficiency I was asleep—at least so I pretended. With a sigh she pulled the blanket from me and also went to sleep—or perhaps she too was pretending. But it was a solution, if a chilly one. My last thoughts that night were that Kenge would at least have left me some of the

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361 this area. It was named Eboyo, and the villagers belonged to the
103 BaBira tribe, predominant in the southern and central Ituri. Here
101 there were two chiefs—the traditional chief, Sabani, and the govern-
621 ment-appointed chief, Kapamba. Kapamba's job was to see that the
622 right crops were planted, harvested, and marketed to the Belgian
• 648 government, and that the taxes were collected and paid over. The
439 Belgian policy was largely to let the people in this rather difficult
and unprofitable part of the Congo live as they had always lived.
The only stipulations were that they should live peacefully, and that
in addition to their own small plantations they should cultivate more
ground for crops which would both help to feed immigrant labor
forces, such as the road gangs and the workers at Station de Chasse,
and be of commercial value to the Belgians in the world market for
such products as cotton, palm oil and groundnuts.

622 Kapamba was not a popular figure. He was small and pathetically
554 ugly. His hut was at the very far end of the village, behind a large
hillock on the top of which stood his baraza. Only his close relatives
and a few Pygmies lived near him.

In the village proper, Sabani's house was in the center. Sabani
was a sly old man whose father had married a Lese girl, from the
648 eastern edge of the forest. Sabani changed his tribal affiliation to suit
the convenience of the moment, and the Belgians found it impos-
sible to deal with him, so they appointed Kapamba in his place. But
Sabani was still the real power in the village, and the real authority.
He was also the chief ritual authority for miles around, and he was
a frightening sight when painted and dressed for his role of witch
doctor at the time of the nkumbi initiation ceremony. Even on
622 other occasions when he wished to be formal—such as the visit of a
554 Belgian administrator—he was no less inspiring. Ragged trousers
291 came down to within a few inches of feet that were barely covered by
648 ill-fitting shoes, slit where they pinched so as to be more comfortable.
An old khaki tunic covered his bare chest, and on his head he wore

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177 it had a railway, which aroused his deepest curiosity. He could not think why the trains were limited in their movement by the iron rails, and could not turn wherever they wanted to. There was something about this restriction of freedom that bothered him. I took him to see a football match between the workers of a local brewery and those of a large combine store. Just before the match we had been drinking palm wine in a small African bar, and found it much stronger than the wine made in the forest. So Kenge rooted happily for what he called "Men of the Beer," but why people should spend the afternoon kicking a ball back and forth was as puzzling to him as were the captive trains.

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648 We spent only a few days in Paulis, branching out from there along the northern limits of the forest. Then we turned eastward and made our way across and down into Lese country. The BaLese are considered to be arch-sorcerers and witches, and it was with great reluctance that Kenge agreed to stay in the village of Chief Lupao, near Nduye. It was several miles off the road, and by accident or design it was empty when we got there. Fires were still smoldering and smoking, but there was no other sign of life. The chief's baraza, a huge edifice with a thatched roof, stood open in front of his house; the fire had been recently made up, but nobody came out to greet us.

Kenge was getting more and more nervous, and I was on the point of giving in to his repeated requests to leave and find a more hospitable place to stay, when a young man appeared and wandered idly toward us. He stopped some way off and stood there looking at us. This was a completely new situation to me, as in every other village, even where we had been total strangers, we had been almost embarrassed by the hospitality of the people. I waited to see if the man's curiosity would get the better of him, but after a while I gave up and went over to talk to him. Kenge refused to move from the safety of the car, and stood there with his hand on the door, ready to lock himself inside at a moment's notice. For him this was a

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For him this was a

foreign world indeed, for these were not only villagers, but villagers who had a name for devouring corpses.

I made little headway with the young man, who continued to chew on a stick while he avoided giving any direct answers to my queries as to where Chief Lupao was. He questioned me in turn, and when I had assured him that I was not a missionary, or a government agent, or a plantation owner looking for forced labor, he wandered away—still chewing. He called back over his shoulder that he would try and find his father, the chief. Kenge was speechless with indignation because we had not been invited into the baraza or offered water to wash with. He said that even villagers did that much for strangers, however unwelcome. He was more unhappy than ever.

Eventually Lupao's son returned and said that his father would be back soon from his plantation, and we could sit down in the baraza if we wanted to. With that he walked away and once more we were alone. By now it was too late to think of going anywhere else, so we entered the baraza and sat down on a couple of logs near the fire. After an hour a small crowd of old men and children had gathered around and were staring at us silently and speculatively. Any time either of us tried to talk with them they just shook their heads. Kenge was beginning to be more impatient than afraid, and he demanded that someone go and fetch water for us to wash with, asking the bystanders what kind of savages they were to let their guests stay unwashed and unfed. The chief's son looked at Kenge coldly and asked him what tribe he belonged to. Kenge replied without hesitation that he was not of the village, but of the forest—he was a Pygmy. The young man nodded and said, "So I see!" And still no move was made to fetch us any water.

Just then Chief Lupao came out of his house. An extremely surly and untidy old man, he did not try to disguise the fact that he had been sleeping, and not in his plantation. He greeted us in an offhand way and asked what we wanted. I explained that we wanted

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had one of our most fruitful treks of all, learning many new and important things about the forest people.

The terrain was very different from that of Epulu, being mountainous and rocky, with jagged boulders sticking out of the ground at crazy angles as though some great city had once been swallowed by an earthquake. But even on the steepest escarpments, where the huge trees seemed to grow out of the very rocks, the Pygmies moved as quickly and surely and silently as elsewhere. For the first time I saw Kenge in difficulty, he being as unused to this kind of mountaineering as I was. But we were anxious to press inward as far as we could, and once again we found ourselves almost back at the Epulu; it lay about two days to the southwest at most.

While we were in this part of the forest we heard many stories of the old wars between the various tribes of villagers, as they invaded the forest, and how the Pygmies got caught between them so that they were forced to side with one group or another.

On leaving Nduye we continued southward, past the administrative center of Mambasa, and when we had crossed the Ituri, which at this higher point was, in Kenge's words, "a mere child," we once more left the car and began walking. At the end of a day, having passed through three deserted Pygmy villages, we were beginning to feel dubious at the wisdom of having come so far without a guide when we came to the banks of a large tributary of the Ituri. There, to our mutual surprise, was one of the legendary vine bridges, slung high up over the swirling waters, suspended by lianas fastened to the topmost branches of the trees on either bank. I was glad that Kenge was amazed, because there is every reason to believe that these bridges, contrary to the information supplied by romantically minded movie-makers, are not of Pygmy origin. To cross the bridge we climbed up a series of logs leading to a fork in the tree to which our end of the bridge was anchored, and from there we made our swaying way across. Kenge refused to look down, and when I stopped in the

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Our last stop was outside Mambasa, where the local administrator in a fit of well-meaning but not very far-seeing zeal was "liberating" the Pygmies from the villagers. He did this by cutting down clearings along the roadside and setting up villages for the Pygmies to live in, so that they could cultivate plantations that would provide additional crops for the government to collect and market. Kenge was immensely amused at the thought of being liberated. He said the Pygmies would still go to the Negro villages. Why should they work on their own plantations when they could steal from real villagers?

We accompanied the administrator, a fat and jovial man, hospitable and friendly, who genuinely liked the Pygmies. But he could not be made to believe that what he was doing was wrong. He had called various groups of Pygmies down to the clearings and talked to each group, explaining that the government would supply them with all the necessary tools for cultivation and give them the seeds to plant. In time, each Pygmy village would have a baraza, like the Negro villages, and a schoolhouse, and the important ones would have their own dispensaries. He then asked in a democratic way if they wanted to come and join the plan. They all shouted yes, to a man, and the administrator turned to me with a victorious smile of pride. He then commanded the villagers he had brought with him to distribute beans to each Pygmy, with instructions as to how and where to plant them. The Pygmies all lined up, and as soon as each had received his share he rejoined the end of the line. When they were caught out and taken off the line to their allotments to plant the beans, they listened gravely and began to work. Half an hour later most of the beans were being cooked for lunch.

The plan was doomed to failure for several reasons. For one, the Pygmies are not able to stand the direct sunlight and become ill outside the shade of the forest. They also become ill because they have no resistance, as the villagers have, to the kinds of disease they are open to in a sedentary life. Water which the villager can drink with

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361 impunity gives severe stomach disorder to the Pygmy, who is used
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147 to the fresh clean water of forest streams. Flies and mosquitoes carry
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181 germs unknown to him in his natural home. But above all, his entire
code of behavior and thought is geared to his nomadic forest life:
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361 to bring him to a settled life in a village is to ask him overnight to
782 abandon one way of life, a way he has lived for thousands of years,
and adopt another. Where the Pygmies did make the attempt there
was complete moral as well as physical disintegration. Not long ago
a Belgian friend from the Congo told me that the day before he had
left, on one small "model plantation" where the Pygmies were being
liberated, twenty-nine had died in one day from sunstroke.

I spoke about the plan to many Pygmies, and when Kenge got
back to Epulu he talked as much about it as about anything else that
he had seen on his journey to the outside world. Old Moke summed
[829] up the attitude that I had found everywhere. "The forest is our
home; when we leave the forest, or when the forest dies, we shall die.
We are the people of the forest."

177 Before the Belgians stopped inter-
439 village and intertribal warfare, the
648 most important single duty of the pygmy was to act as scout and intelligence agent in the forest. As soon as he became aware of a raiding party crossing the boundary of his host's territory he would hotfoot it to the village to give warning. This eternal vigilance on the part of the pygmy was probably of more value to his hosts than the meat that he brought in. Now that the need of this has ceased he is fulfilling only half of his contract; the Negro, who still provides plantains and manufactured objects, is still fulfilling all of his. Still both are satisfied.

177 Ordinarily, the pygmy keeps inside
439 the territory of his Negro hosts. Individuals and small family groups may go outside to visit relatives in other
361 bands, but this causes no disturbance
621 because the visitors turn in their game
648 to the hosts of the kinsmen whom they are visiting. This constant milling about evens up on the whole, and the number of pygmies in any band at any one time is about the same. There are occasions, however, when the hunters of a band may have a strong reason to pass beyond the landmarks which designate their hosts' territorial boundaries. If there is a lot of game just over the border and no pygmies there to catch it, the pygmies will tell their Negroes, who tell the Negroes owning that part of the forest. An agreement will be made between the two groups of Negroes, and the pygmies will be allowed to take the game, provided that they pay a part of it to the owners of the forest, and another part to their own hosts. This kind of economic treaty, therefore, brings the pygmies of a given band into contact with two groups of Negroes, and may initiate new relationships.

177 When the pygmy camp is close to
574 the Negro village, some of the pygmies